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### The Riverside Library for Young People

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## GIRLS AND WOMEN

BY E. CHESTER

(Harriet E. Paine)



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# GIRLS AND WOMEN.

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## I.

### AN AIM IN LIFE.

For the sake of girls who are just beginning life, let me tell the stories of some other girls who are now middle-aged women. Some of them have succeeded and some have failed in their purposes, and often in a surprising way.

I remember a girl who left school at seventeen with the highest honors. Immediately we began to see her name in the best magazines. The heavy doors of literature seemed to swing open before her. Then suddenly we heard no more of her. A dozen years later she was known to no one outside her own circle. She was earning her living as book-keeper in a large five-cent store! She led the life of a drudge, and that was not the worst of it. She was a sensitive woman, and there was much that was mortifying in her position. All her Greek and Italian books were packed away. She knew no more of science than when she left school. At odd minutes she read good novels, and that was all she had to do with literature. Those who had expected much of her thought her life was a failure, and she thought so too.

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Yet there is another side to the picture. The aim she had set for herself in life was not to be an author, though that idea had taken strong hold on her, and she tried to realize it in spite of great discouragements. This was her minor aim, but the grand aim with her had always been to lead the divine life at whatever cost. It proved to cost almost everything. Her utmost help was needed for her large family, which was poor. Unusual as her success with editors had been, no girl of seventeen could depend on a large income from magazines. A good salary was offered her as book-keeper, and she accepted it.

She tried to continue her favorite occupation by rising early, but she was not strong enough to go on long in that way. She sometimes had an hour in the evening, but when she saw the wistful look in her mother's face she would not shut herself up alone. At the rare times when she was still free to choose she went back to her books and her pen, but she could not do much, and at last she felt it would be better not to try. It was simply a source of vexation, and she needed a serene mind above all things.

The only way her life could open towards beauty or happiness at all was by putting the true spirit into her daily work. With a resolute heart she did this. No books were ever more beautifully kept than hers; every figure was clear and perfect; every column was added without a mistake. In short, she did her work like an artist.

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To the sales-girls she was like a guardian angel. She might have written good stories all her life without helping others half so much. Little, weak, frivolous girls became strong, fine women simply from daily contact with her. She did not realize that. She only knew that she loved the girls and that they loved her. She did know that she helped her family—with her money. Her spirit helped them unconsciously still more.

When at last she gave up the minor aim of her life, and no longer tried to be learned or famous, she had her energies set free for many little things which had previously been crowded out. It was easy now to find a leisure hour to help any one who needed sympathy. There was time to watch the beauty of the sunset or of the falling snow. If she had no time to scramble through a volume of a new poet, she could still learn line by line some favorite old poem, and let it sink into her heart, so that it did its work thoroughly. If she could not find time to learn the history of all

the artists from the time of Phidias to the last New York exhibition, yet when a beautiful picture was before her she could look at it thoughtfully without feeling that she must hurry on to the next. In this way, perhaps, she gained a more absolute culture than in the way she would have chosen, a culture of thought and character which told on every one who came near her.

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She was always climbing up towards God, and his help never failed her. The climbing was hard, yet the pathway was radiant with light. Those who were stumbling along in the darkness by her side saw the light and were able to walk erect.

I cannot say she was altogether happy with so many of her fine powers unused. Perhaps she was not even quite right in sacrificing herself completely. Sometimes she fostered selfishness in others while she tried to cast it out of herself. But so far as she could see she had no choice. If she had refused the sacrifice, it would have been by giving up the grand aim of her life. Her minor aim was good in itself, but it conflicted with something better. Those who did not know her life intimately thought it a failure. Those who saw deeper knew that her utter failure in what was non-essential had been the condition of essential success.

I remember another brilliant girl who did win her way. She was poor and plain and friendless, but she won wealth and fame and friends, and then, with all this success, she blossomed into beauty. She had a struggle, but she came out victorious. I think she was happy. She was glad to be beautiful and to be loved. She had music and pictures and travel in abundance, and she appreciated these things. She liked to give to the poor, and she did give bountifully and with a grace and sweetness better than the gift.

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She painted pictures which everybody admired, and that pleased her. She had dreamed of all this when a child. She had genius and she had perseverance. Her aim was to be a famous artist, and she did not flinch from any work or sacrifice which would help her to that end. So far all was well, and she reached the goal. As there was nothing to prevent her carrying out secondary plans at the same time, she could be cultivated and charitable without giving up her great object.

She wanted to be good besides. She never deliberately decided for the wrong against the right. And yet a noble life was not first in her thoughts. When she was a school-girl she had a lover who was like a better self. By and by he chose to study for the ministry, while she went to the city to try her fortune. So far they shared every thought and feeling and hope. She knew she was a better woman with him than with any one else. But at last he was called to a remote country parish, and for himself was satisfied with it. But she—how then could she be his wife? Her heart was torn in the strife. Some women whose vision was less keen would have married him, hoping that in some way they might still carry out their own ambition. But she was at a critical point in her career and she knew it. She had just begun to be known personally to influential people, and her name was beginning to be known to the public. She dared not risk leaving her post. She wrote her lover a charming letter,—for she did love him,—and told him how it was. "When I have won my victory," said she, "I shall be a free woman. And you will love me just as much when I have more to give you than I have now. But now I have my little talent confided to me, and I dare not fold it away in a napkin." Her lover agreed to this, though it was hard for him. They worked apart year after year. At last she was a free woman, with money enough to live without work at all, and with fame enough to work when and where she pleased. But gradually she cared less and less for the objects of her lover's life. She would not own to herself that she had failed in constancy to him. She always thought she was glad to see him when he came to the city. But he felt the difference in her, though he tried not to see it. She was far more beautiful than when he had first loved her; but in the days when she was so plain and had worn shabby dresses there had been an expression about her mouth which he missed now. The lovely face was still eager with longing, but it had lost the look of aspiration. Reluctantly, he admitted the change in her. At last he told her what he felt, that she had ceased to love him. She had deceived herself so far that she had not realized how idle her excuses were for putting off the marriage from year to year. When the separation came she felt a sharp pang—as much of mortification at her own failure as of wounded love. Yet she consented to the separation, and she seemed to be happy after it. She thought her life had been tragic, and that she had made a heroic sacrifice of her love to the necessity which her genius laid upon her to do a certain work in the world.

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I should be afraid to say that she was altogether wrong. There are, no doubt, some women who are meant to serve the whole world rather than the little domestic circle. And yet she did give up what she had believed the best part of herself. And her pictures, though they were admired, lacked an indescribable something of which her first crude sketches had given promise. I do not think that, after all, they did very much to interpret beauty to the world. She had two aims in life, both good, but she placed the first second, and the second first. Perhaps, on the whole, she was happier for the choice she made. But she missed something better than happiness which is always missed by those who make the lower aim their object—she missed the aspiration for higher happiness.

I have seen many successful lives led by women who as girls showed very moderate abilities, simply because they had one definite aim. I knew a girl who became an excellent actress. She was a pretty girl with a little talent. She was not poor, but she had an ambition to be on the stage. She had the good sense to see that she was not a genius, but she also had courage enough to persevere in using the ability she had. For the first ten years she made so little apparent

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headway that even among her acquaintances many people did not know she had ever acted at all. In the mean time she had studied hard. She knew many popular plays by heart, and had carefully watched other actresses. She was acquainted with a number of theatrical people. She had always been at hand when a manager wanted an extra peasant girl, or when a waiting maid was ill. She had joined a small troupe traveling through the bleakest and roughest parts of the Northwest in midwinter. By and by she was fitted to be of use in a stock company. Then, after a few more years, she achieved what she had been striving for. She was able to take the slighter characters in the plays of Shakespeare. No one excelled her here. No great actress would take so small a part, and no small actress was willing to take such pains. Her power was unique and she was indispensable. Her name was seldom on the play-bills, but she added something to the culture of the world by making the interpretation of Shakespeare more complete.

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Her success came first from having a definite aim, and second, from understanding herself sufficiently to aim at something within her power; but happily it was also the highest thing within her power. She was both humble and aspiring. She showed her humility in shrinking from no drudgery, and satisfied her cravings for the ideal by doing the smallest thing in the best way possible to her. She enjoyed even her drudgery because she put the best of herself into it, but, more than that, she knew it was leading her exactly in the direction she wanted to go. If the drudgery had led to nothing she would have needed all the moral power of our little book-keeper to save her from misery. Her own happier life required some moral power, how much it is hard to say. A woman might do all she did and be little the better for it. It would depend on the aim she cherished in her heart. If she had no higher aim than to be a good actress her life did not avail much. But if her acting was only the minor aim, then her life was thoroughly noble as well as successful. Her choice of a minor aim makes it probable that she also had the highest aim. Otherwise she would have been either more or less humble. She would either have wished to be a star actress or have been contented with any trifling parts which brought her money and admiration.

The best happiness comes from our perseverance in following the grand aim of life. But "the kind of happiness which we all recognize as such" is generally that which comes from the successful pursuit of our minor aim. Herbert Spencer says that every creature is happy when he is fully using his powers. I have known a girl with a magnificent voice who endured great hardships for a musical education, and who finally accomplished her purpose and enchanted the world with her singing. She was happy. Of course everybody expected her to be. But I have known another girl, equally happy, carefully working in the laboratory to find the water-tubes of a star-fish or the nerves of a clam. This girl said to me with a face bright with enthusiasm, "When I first began to work with Professor — in the laboratory it was as if I had been traveling all my life in a desert land, and had suddenly come upon fountains of fresh water." She was as poor and obscure as my singer was rich and famous, but she was using her powers and was happy.

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Of course the kind of happiness to be found even in secondary success depends on the great aim of any life. In some cases it almost seems as if the minor aim were the only one. The happiness it brings cannot go very high, yet so far as a looker-on may judge it feels like happiness. But most people—perhaps all, if we only knew it—do acknowledge the grand aim in life, even though they make very little effort to reach it. When they consciously neglect this for the minor aim, they are uneasy and not thoroughly happy; but when the minor aim is good in itself and is always made subservient to the higher, success there does prove a well-spring of delight.

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Spencer's remark is also true in the best sense, for no powers crave exercise so much as the higher powers. If my singer had done a sinful deed no applause could have made her happy. And, on a lower plane, if she had lost the husband she dearly loved, even her art would not have satisfied her.

It may seem as if I am choosing all my illustrations from among people who have special gifts, and that nothing I say applies to the great army of girls who will never be distinguished, and who are all the dearer for not wishing to be so. I have not forgotten this, but I began with striking illustrations because they are easiest to understand.

The grand aim of life should be the same for all, whether gifted or not. But the particular aim must vary with the individual. Probably with five girls out of ten the particular aim is to have a happy home. Once we might have said nine girls out of ten, but the present tendency of thought is to make girls ambitious,—too ambitious, it sometimes seems, for the very best of life.

Of course selfishness shows itself in various ways, and the girl who wishes to have a happy home without thinking how she shall make a happy home may be more selfish than the girl who dreams of fame, but with the understanding that the price of fame is, and ought to be, the giving of some blessing to the world.

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I know a delightful girl who seems to think of nothing but making others happy from the moment when she meets her maid with a cheerful "Good-morning," till she contrives that some less attractive girl shall have the most desirable partner in the ball-room in the evening. She gives her money and her time and her thought to the service of other people. This is so natural to her that no one thinks of her as making it a conscious aim, but the result is so beautiful as to suggest that it would be the best aim for every girl. Nevertheless she has a still higher aim, for sometimes the

happiness of other people—at least their visible happiness—clashes with some other duty. Then she does not fail. She gives her hard refusal in pleasant but firm words, and she tells the truth even if it makes some one wince. She is not a genius, but, on the whole, I hardly know another girl so full of the best life. That her highest aim is the true one is without question, and that her minor aim is the true one for her must also be admitted. Whether it is so for all is not quite clear. She has the natural gift which makes all her ministrations to others acceptable, but every one is not so endowed.

She has a cousin as unselfish as she is whose capacity is entirely different. She is a quiet, reserved, thoughtful girl, who always speaks slowly. She is just and good-tempered, and is ready to give her time and money when she sees she can be of use. But her thoughts move in other channels. She has excellent mathematical abilities, and she is always resolving some difficult problem. She hopes some day to do some work in astronomy. Of course she would be glad to do some great work and be known as a benefactor to mankind, but probably she works from love of her work more than from the hope of doing good. She, too, is charming, but it takes a long time to know her well.

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Should one of these girls try to do the work of the other? Or is one better than the other? I think not, since both look so steadily towards the highest star in their field of vision. The minor aim of life must always have reference to the gifts of the individual. Even visiting the poor would become absurd if nobody did anything else.

If we believe in an overruling Providence we cannot of course say that anything is by chance; but so far as we can see, failure in this world—that is, failure to reach our minor aim—does sometimes seem to be due to a trifling accident. Yet success is not so. If Byron, for instance, awoke one morning and found himself famous, it was because he had previously done the work which was suddenly recognized by the world. Indeed, none of us need look for success who does not choose a definite aim in life. And, more than that, no discouragement must turn us aside from it. We may fail in the end then, but we shall have followed the only possible path to success.

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How shall we choose our aim? We know what our grand aim must be, and that if we do our part there we shall not fail, for we shall have God to help us; and we know that our minor aim must never be opposed to this. But what shall our minor aim be, or shall we be content to drift without any at all?

We must try to understand ourselves so far at least as to know what our own powers and tastes are, and choose accordingly. A young girl hardly knows her own bent. Then the uncertainty in regard to her marriage and the great change that necessarily makes in her pursuits renders the problem harder for her than for her brothers.

Most girls wish to be the centre of a happy home, but many of them are very careless about the means of making themselves fit to be such a centre. They think when love comes it will do everything, and it is true that it will do wonders. But suppose a girl remembers that if she is well she can make her family happier than if she is always ailing,—suppose she remembers how much good housekeeping does to make a home attractive; that if she is musical her singing will calm the troubled waters, while if she is not her practicing will be a burden; that there are some studies which bear directly on life and some others which will be of infinite use to a mother in training her children,—is she not more likely to have a happy home than if her aim had been less definite?

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But what of the girls who choose this aim and who never have a home? Their lot is hard, but they may add happiness to some home not their own. If they are not obliged to support themselves, they can probably create some kind of a home for themselves, though not that of their ideal. If they must earn their living, the problem is harder. Circumstances may force them into a widely different path from that they would have chosen. Then they must remember the grand aim of their lives, and do the best work they can for the sake of it. Still, they may use the home-making faculty in some measure in the humblest attic.

But there is a large and ever larger class of girls with other tastes than domestic ones. Here, I think, the danger is greater than in case of even the most unfortunate girls with domestic tastes; for tastes and talents do not always agree. We have all known girls willing to practice six hours a day who could never be musicians, and most girls think they could write a book. Many people who are quite free to choose make too ambitious a choice. It seems a part of the office of culture to correct such ambitions. I have in mind a class of half-taught school-girls many of whom fondly hoped to be poetesses; and I remember a class of highly cultivated girls, who had had every advantage of education which money could buy, who were full of anxiety on leaving school because they could not see that they had capacity enough to do any work worth doing in the world. The general verdict among them was that as they had money they could give it to the poor, but that they had nothing in themselves. They were as much too timid as the others were too confident.

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A girl who has to earn her living has a safeguard, for which few are very thankful. No one will pay her to indulge her tastes without reference to her talents. She finds out gradually what *ought* to be her minor aim, for she discovers the special service she can render to the world in return for what it offers to her. In most cases she wins a reasonable measure of success and happiness.

But some of us are obstinate. We see one pathway we long to tread even though it is beset with stones and briars. We are determined to take that way, even if we never climb high enough to penetrate the low-lying mists which darken it. We would rather pursue even a little way the painful pathway which leads to the glorious mountain-top than to follow an easier path to some lower summit. If we truly feel that, we do well to take the path, for we have a right to forget ourselves for the sake of our aim. But if we ask for success after all, it is mere blind vanity which makes us so obstinate in our choice.

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Let us remember that our direct usefulness in the world and most of our conscious happiness will depend on our choosing and steadily pursuing as our minor aim that for which our nature fits us, even if we wish our nature had been different; while our utmost usefulness and our highest happiness will depend on our clearness of vision in seeing, and our unwavering fidelity in following, the grand aim of life.

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## II.

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### HEALTH.

Mr. Clapp says enthusiastically that we cannot imagine Rosalind or Portia or Cordelia or Juliet with neuralgia or headache. And I believe that Shakespeare's women have now taken the place of the more lackadaisical and sentimental heroines of the past in the minds of many girls.

Now that girls wish to be well, it is worth while to consider two questions. First, why is health so important? Unless the answer to this question is clear, how can any one be ready to sacrifice health to any higher duty? Girls do sacrifice it frequently even when they know what they are doing, but it is generally for a caprice, because they want to dance later or skate longer, or study unreasonably; or sometimes they cannot resist the temptation of food which is not convenient for them, or they are willing to indulge their nerves too much, or it is too much trouble not to take cold.

I wish every girl who knows that she does not live up to her light in this respect would say to herself once a day for a month, "I ought to be vigorously well if I want to do my part in the world, or to be in thoroughly good spirits." I wish she would think of the meaning of what she says, and then see if she does not do some things she is loth to do and avoid some pleasing temptations. I believe a month's application of this formula would give her a new insight into the value of health. I speak not only of health, but of *vigorous* health. We want to do our part in the world, and that part ought to be our utmost. Agassiz could work fifteen hours a day. Most of us could never do anything so magnificent as that, and the attempt to do it would probably end in our being unfitted to do any work at all. But suppose Agassiz had said, "Twelve hours is too much for most men to work, so I can afford to be careless of my surplus health as long as I have strength to work twelve hours." The world would not only have lost much in the matter of his discoveries, but the spirit of all his work would have been different. I do not mean that it was necessarily the best thing for Agassiz even to work fifteen hours a day on fishes. He might have given part of his time to music, or friends, or novels, because he saw that, on the whole, such recreation met the higher needs of life. But I mean that he was a man to whom a full life was possible for fifteen hours a day, and that he would have been wrong to be satisfied with less.

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And now, second, *how* shall girls be thoroughly well? The laws of health are few and simple. They are so well understood by the parents of this generation that it may seem a waste of time to allude to them here. Yet I am writing for girls whose ideas are often vague.

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One word in regard to the study of Physiology. It is a fine study. If a girl thoroughly understands how her body ought to work in health, how one organ acts with another, then, in case of any local disturbance, she will probably be capable of seeing how, if the general tone of the system is raised, the particular difficulty will disappear, and she will no longer follow blindly rules she has learned by rote. Yet people learn more by practice than by theory, and it is probable that the fascinating study of Physiology is of more use intellectually than physically to most school-girls. If they are allowed to dwell much on diseases of the body instead of on its normal action, the study may be a positive injury to them by leading to morbid conditions.

And now again, What are the essentials of health? Several things may be regarded as equally necessary, so that I cannot lay down rules in exactly the order of importance, yet it is purposely that I begin with

*Breathe fresh air.*

Food is important, but we can live hours without taking food, while we must have air every moment. Moreover, the oxygen of the air actually nourishes the body as food does, by forming a part of the blood.

How shall we get fresh air? First, by spending all the time possible out of doors, both in summer and winter, in storm and sunshine. Every one acknowledges the advantage of exercise in the open air for its own sake; but in New England we have not yet learned how far it is possible to live in the open air. I was once at a country-house in Switzerland which illustrates this ideal. The breakfast-table was spread on a terrace shaded by plane-trees, outside the dining-room door. The table was then cleared and books and work brought out. The family devotions were conducted there. The students studied and wrote, the ladies sewed and knit, and the maids prepared the vegetables for dinner which was also eaten there. For six months in the year this was the ordinary course of life. It would not, to be sure, be possible in all climates, but oftener than we think.

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Yet two thirds of our life must be passed in the house, and usually in closed rooms on account of the cold. Now two persons cannot sit an hour in one room before the air becomes vitiated. Most forms of ventilation prove inadequate. M. was a vigorous young lady who made it a rule to leave a window slightly open all the time she was at work, being careful not to sit in the draught. But where this is not convenient, it is a good plan to open a window wide every hour or two for a minute. I knew a girl who tried that plan, but gave it up because it seemed so ridiculous to jump up from her studies every little while for the purpose. Yet nothing is worse than to sit still at one occupation for several hours, and even the slight change of position would do one almost as much good as the fresh air.

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It is indispensable to have the window open through the night in every sleeping-room. But here caution is needed, because when the body is quiet a draught is a serious injury. Strips of wood across the open part of the window will generally be sufficient protection. Some of you shiver at the idea of breathing out of door air in the winter. You are so cold! Do you know that the moment you begin to breathe it you begin to grow warm from the increased action of the blood? But

*Do not take cold.*

The results of colds are more serious than one likes to say. Consumption, pneumonia, catarrh, deafness are some of their names. And the whole tone of the system is lowered by them. But the over-careful people are precisely those who suffer most from colds, because here, as in so many other directions, the nerves have sway.

Now, most colds are taken in one of four ways: By sitting in a draught, by becoming thoroughly chilled, by wetting the feet, and by breathing raw air. But none of these things are necessarily injurious to a young girl in ordinary health—*provided* she at once does what she can to counteract their effects. Move out of the draught, warm the body as thoroughly as it was chilled, dry the feet before sitting down, and cover the mouth with a veil so that the air is slightly warmed before breathing. Then one need never stay in for the weather, even if one already has a cold.

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Of course there are very delicate girls who need special care, but I am speaking to the average girl. Do not forget that a cold is a terrible thing, but also remember that it can be avoided by a little care at the right time, and by entire forgetfulness at other times.

*Take plenty of exercise.*

The more you can exercise in the open air the better. And if you take exercise you will find it possible to be out of doors on very cold days. If you are not strong on your feet, perhaps you are strong in the muscles for rowing. If you cannot row, perhaps you can ride. If you cannot ride, perhaps you can drive. If you cannot drive, perhaps you can exercise in the gymnasium. If you cannot do any of these things, do what you can. Walk from your door to the street and back again. Do the same thing over in fifteen minutes, and unless you are a miserable *bonâ fide* invalid your muscles will soon become more useful. Doing errands, and going about to people who need you, will give you valuable exercise for which you take no thought.

But some of you are too busy to exercise many hours a day in the open air, and so you ought to be. The next best thing for you is housework. Perhaps you do not like that because you see it under the wrong angle of vision. Whether you like it or not, it is within reach of most of you, and would do you good.

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But suppose your books and your sewing are necessary and keep you busy all day. Then you are to remember to change your position often. At the end of every hour, when you open the window, take a few deep breaths, stretch your arms and legs and fingers, and you will be better able to go on with your task.

*Eat such food as you can thoroughly digest.*

There are persons who are always troubled as to what they shall eat, and who, with all their care, are always ailing. I do not want you to think about your food so much that you can digest nothing, but I believe that a very little observation will teach you what is good for you individually. If you have a dizzy head, or rising of food, or a bad breath, or uneasiness of the bowels, you may be pretty sure that you have eaten something that disagrees with you, and by a little watchfulness you may discover what it is and avoid it.

Food that you can digest very well when you are fresh may be much too heavy for you when you are tired. And if you are thinking intently while you eat, the blood is drawn from the stomach where it should be to the brain where it should not be. Few people can digest vegetables not

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thoroughly cooked, or fruit not thoroughly ripe. I think the study of Physiology is of more practical hygienic value in teaching the absolute necessity of using food that can be readily assimilated by the body, and in showing how different foods should be combined to that end, than in any other way. A little fish or meat, especially beef, considerable bread, especially of the coarser grains, some vegetables, and fruit according to individual organizations, make up the necessary daily fare. A tired stomach should begin with soup. As for the thousand appetizing viands set before us, each must decide for herself what to eat. As long as you have none of the symptoms of indigestion, it is probably safe to gratify the appetite and take delight in food without further care; but if these symptoms appear, think first whether you were too tired, or had too busy a brain to digest anything; next, whether anything you ate was unripe or underdone, and finally, whether there was anything in the bill of fare which had ever troubled you before. Then correct your future practice accordingly, and think no more about it. Depend upon it, you will soon be well, and, further, you will find, with mortification perhaps, that some of the headaches you thought came from overtaxing the brain, or from sensibility to the woes of the world, were really due to improper food. As compensation for your mortification you will be a more useful woman for your whole life.

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*Work regularly with both body and mind.*

Those who must work for self-support are probably, on the whole, in better health than those who are free from necessity. A girl who stands all day behind a counter runs some risks in health, but her chances are still as good as those of the fine lady who broods over imaginary ailments till they become real. To those who must work I have but little to say, for they have a narrow margin of choice. There are several suggestions to be made, however. If your work is physical, use a little of your leisure every day in some mental occupation. The best thing is to do some real studying. If you can only spend fifteen minutes every day on history or literature or botany or French, you will find yourself the better for it bodily, because it will give you an outlook beyond the daily horizon, and take your thoughts from your own weariness. If you have no leisure, or if your work is so exhausting that even fifteen minutes of study seems burdensome, then keep some interesting novel of good tone at hand, and read a little in that every day to change the current of your thoughts. If you find, however, that you usually have more than an hour for your novel, you may suspect that fifteen minutes of study would not hurt you.

Do you know that you are never resting when you are thinking that you are tired? When you are tired rest at once, if you can, by sitting or lying down, or taking recreation, as experience has shown you to be best. But then think no more about it. Perhaps you may be overworking. If you truly believe this and see any possibility of saving yourself, do so, even if you have to give up something which seems particularly important. If you *must* overwork,—and there are such cases, though they are not so common as we think,—accept the condition as a part of the discipline of life, rest whenever you can, and say and think as little about it as you can. This advice is to save you from one form of the nervous diseases which are the peculiar misfortune of our time.

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If your work is sedentary take physical exercise in your leisure time,—out of doors, if possible; but remember that housework is the best substitute for that.

The women who are not obliged to work are those who most need this precept. They can drive, and by and by they cannot walk. They can lie on the lounge when they feel indisposed, and they lie there long after they would get up if they had any work to do. They have the best chance for complete physical development, but they have great temptations to neglect their opportunities. Among the sweetest of such women there is an alarming amount of nervous disease, which is, alas! at the foundation a refined selfishness. To speak plainly, as one has said, we are all as lazy as we dare to be, and these women have no check upon laziness. No power of body or mind can be preserved without exercise, and the muscles grow soft, and the moral fibre grows weak. These women are lovely, they speak in gentle voices, and they never use a harsh word, but they rule all about them with a rod of iron. Dr. Weir Mitchell, in his blunt way, says that nervous diseases among women have destroyed the happiness of more families than intemperance.

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By and by the invalid cannot rally even if she has the will, but it is hard to decide where responsibility ends. If your mothers or your aunts are nervous invalids, do not judge them. Causes may have been at work which you cannot see. Pity their terrible misfortune, and do all you can to make them happy. But you, who have the added light of another generation, are inexcusable if you fall into such a state.

How can you avoid it? It is easy to say, "Do not talk about your headaches, or your delicate constitution;" but how are you to help thinking about these things? Decide on regular daily work for yourselves. If you are still school-girls and your head feels heavy in the morning, think whether you would be justified in staying at home if you were a teacher. Teachers have headaches too, but they seldom stay at home for one, and they are seldom the worse for going to school.

When you leave school undertake some regular work. Take charge of the marketing, or oversee the housekeeping for a year. Ask the officers of the Associated Charities to give you something definite to do, and do it regularly. If you are not fitted for visiting the poor, suppose you make experiments in natural science. See what Lubbock did with ants, bees, and wasps. There are thousands of such experiments to be tried, but few people have the leisure for them. You may not understand your results, but you can make the accurate observations which are absolutely necessary before a great man can find out the laws which govern them.

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Some mental work you must do. Of course you wish that. If you are in a city like Boston, I will tell you what you will be tempted to do. You will be tempted to sandwich your parties and calls and concerts with two or three courses of morning lectures given by highly trained specialists. In this way you will get a delightful society knowledge of history and literature and art and science, but you will not really exercise your mind very much. Your knowledge will be available for talk, but not for thought. Go to the lectures by all means,—though perhaps one course at a time will do; but be sure that every day at a fixed hour you study the subject of the lecture by yourself, and make it thoroughly your own.

Am I wandering from the topic of health? I think not, because during the last fifty years we have learned almost all the laws of health, and yet we are not much better than before, for our nerves are still on edge. Now girls, even rich girls, can control their nerves, if they begin soon enough, with will and intelligence. And nothing will help them more than to have their bodies and minds constantly employed in rational ways so that there is no room for nervous fancies.

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*Take the rest you need.*

It is hard to know how much you need. Some people must have more than others. It is easy to be lazy on the one hand, and to be dissipated on the other. Some people are injured by springing out of bed as soon as they wake, and others by letting the time drift by while they doze. Some one gives this good rule, "Decide when you ought to rise to make the best use of your day. Make a point of rising at that time; but go to bed earlier and earlier till you find out how much sleep you need in order to be fresh at that hour in the morning." Such a rule would meet most cases, but not all; for though regularity is as important for health as for a wise life, it cannot be an iron regularity, especially if a girl is at all delicate. I would give more flexible rules, though it is harder to keep flexible rules than iron ones.

I have said before that when you are tired you should rest at once, if you can. Rest completely, but not long. Half an hour on the sofa is generally enough. Rise early, because an extra hour in the morning can be better used than one later in the day, and if duties crowd you get tired in remembering what you cannot do. But if you are not fresh in the morning, go to bed earlier. If that does not meet the case, your weariness probably comes from some other cause than insufficient rest. Perhaps your room is not well ventilated, or you may suffer from indigestion, or you may exercise your brain too much and your body too little. If you sit over books or sewing all day, you will always be tired however many hours you sleep. Most girls from fifteen to twenty need about nine hours sleep. If you wish to rise at six, you ought to be in bed at nine.

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A few, a very few, of you must be invalids. You may have inherited a wasting disease, an accident may have crippled you, or something else beyond your control may have brought this misfortune upon you. But most of you have it in your power to be well, and remember you will be doing something morally wrong if you become feeble women.

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### III.

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#### A PRACTICAL EDUCATION.

What is a practical education for a girl? Whatever will fit her for life. The question and answer are trite. What will best fit a girl for life? First of all a well-balanced character. I knew a girl who was a good cook before she was ten years old; she had a genius for sewing; she was an excellent scholar in school, and had musical talent, and yet because of her capriciousness she never filled any place she was called upon to fill in life, and her home was a place of discomfort to her husband and children. Another girl, one of the noblest I ever knew, also found the practical details of life easy, but she was always tossed about from one occupation to another, and from one home to another, because when she found every reality fall short of her ideal she had not the good sense to work quietly to improve the matter, but went about proclaiming her disgust. The first thing we all need is to have our wills so trained that when we see the right, we may instantly do it, and after that we need to be taught to see clearly what is right.

But as character may be formed in many ways why not form it by teaching practical things? What, then, does a girl most need to learn?

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To read, to cook, and to sew.

I put reading first, for though no civilized beings can live without cooking and sewing, and we occasionally find good and gentle women who cannot read, yet a woman of real character who can read can teach herself any branch of housekeeping which she is convinced she ought to know, while a cook cannot teach herself to read in any broad sense; for by reading I do not mean pronouncing words. I want a girl to have a taste for good reading. She may study the whole circle of the sciences without reaching this end, or she may not have more than half a dozen books in her library and yet learn the lesson. The practical advantage of most of her studies in school depends on whether or no they lead to this result. How many girls ever use chemistry, or physics, or geology, or zoölogy in any practical way? Yet what a difference the study of all these things makes in the kind of reading women enjoy! Who can learn enough history in school to be equipped even to teach history? Every teacher knows that to be impossible. But a girl who has

studied history properly in school, who has been taught to think about the influence of men on nations and of nations on men, has open to her a vast treasure-house of books which will add both to her usefulness and happiness.

Some of you may think it is artful in me to propose this broad education under the pretense of requiring that one learn to read, but it is not so. I do believe in a very broad education for girls; but if I had to choose between a broad education which had crammed a girl with knowledge, yet left her without a love for good reading, and a very narrow one which had awakened that thirst, I should choose the second.

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But why do I call this a practical education? Before I answer the question, I must say more on the subject of reading. A girl may enjoy biography, history, travels, and science and yet not have a taste for the best reading, that is, for true literature. She needs essays, novels, and especially poetry. She needs to be able to decide what is best and what is not; she must learn to respond to beauty and truth, and to repel what is false and ugly. This is the practical education, because it bears upon both happiness and character. It is practical as it makes the most of life not only for the woman herself, but for those about her. Bear in mind always that we have supposed her to have a high character and a perfectly trained will. Such reading will develop her judgment as to what is right.

But some women like to read too well. Their will is not perfectly trained, and they would rather think out a domestic problem than act it out. The education of books alone is so one-sided that we cannot consider it practical; it must be supplemented by cooking and sewing.

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At our present stage of progress cooking is more important than sewing. Sewing can be more easily put out of the house than cooking; and in any emergency sewing may be neglected from week to week without serious consequences, while cooking must go on every day. Moreover, cooking is by far the more healthful occupation, and one of the aims of a practical education is to make healthy women.

I do not glorify cooking. I do not think a good cook is the highest type of woman. I do not even think it is the duty of every woman to cook. But cooking is certainly practical, ninety-nine women in a hundred have occasion some time in their lives for this accomplishment, and if they are married it is nearly indispensable for them to have a knowledge of it for the comfort of their families.

Few women are born to be cooks, but most intelligent women can learn to cook. It saves immense labor, however, if as girls they learn the art. It is singular that so many who fancy they want to be chemists hate the idea of going into their own kitchens to work. It is possibly because they cannot choose their own hours for cooking. Cooking certainly develops the mind as much as chemical experiments, and at the end of the process you have something of direct service to mankind, which may or may not be the case with work done in the laboratory.

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Cooking, sewing, and housekeeping are essential for any woman, married or unmarried, who wishes to make a home, and a home is the practical goal of the majority of women. A woman who is neat and intelligent generally proves to be a good housekeeper without special instruction; but with cooking and sewing, "Who wishes to be a master must begin betimes."

Arithmetic is a science which a girl needs to understand thoroughly—not necessarily business arithmetic, which she can learn if occasion requires, but the principles of arithmetic, and she should be able to work in numbers quickly and accurately.

The tide of opinion is against me here. A boy must know arithmetic of course, or how can he fulfill his destiny and make money? But a girl! Nevertheless, no woman can manage a household properly, or even guide her own affairs as a single woman, without a good knowledge of arithmetic. Her money will be wasted, her servants will cheat her, tradespeople will be demoralized by her. There may be so much money at her command that she goes on serenely unaware of harm. She may perform feats of charity, but what was meant to be a blessing becomes a curse through her ignorance.

A millionaire who meant to give his daughter every advantage began as usual with a French nurse and a German maid and a music master who could command a fabulous price, while he engaged an artist of distinction to oversee her untidy attempts at drawing. At last he remembered that she ought to have a teacher in English, and a lady was engaged to teach grammar and literature and history. "And arithmetic?" she asked. "A little, perhaps. Girls need very little."

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The millionaire's daughter came to take her lesson—a bright, handsome girl, full of good nature. "I hate arithmetic, you know," she said confidently, shrugging her shoulders and puckering her brows. "And then, what's the good of it for a girl?"

The teacher did not argue the question, but began her task. "If thirteen yards of ribbon cost \$3.25, how much will one yard cost?" As doing this problem in her mind was quite out of Miss Malvina's power, she was allowed paper and pencil. She wrinkled her forehead, curled her lip, looked up and laughed, "I haven't the faintest idea, don't you know?" A few judicious questions led her to see the necessity of dividing \$3.25 by 13, and she went to work. After a season of struggle her countenance cleared. "Upon my word, I've got the answer—25!" "Twenty-five what?" "Twenty-five—why—twenty-five dollars!" "Wouldn't that be rather high for ribbon?" asked the teacher. "Oh, I don't know," replied Miss Malvina carelessly. "I'll tell you," she added

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triumphantly; "I should tell them to give me the best, and I suppose they would know what I ought to pay." This is hardly an extreme case. In the public schools the girls still learn arithmetic,—perhaps they spend too much strength upon it for the practical mastery they get; but in private schools the best of teachers find it almost impossible to give girls a working knowledge of the subject, because the tide of feeling is so strong against it.

By and by Miss Malvina's father found himself having trouble with his workmen. There were strikes. The family received threatening letters. Malvina's rosy cheeks grew pale. "I don't know what they want," she said forlornly. "They say we are all so extravagant. I don't know what difference that makes to them if we pay for what we buy. We never hurt them. I wish we were not rich at all. It would be much nicer to be poor. I should like to be a—what is it?—a commoner—or a communist or something. Then nobody would be envious."

Now there was not a more generous girl in the world than Malvina. If she had been afloat on a raft after a shipwreck she would have been the one to give up her last ration of water to any one who needed it more. She was ready to pour out money in any case of distress, but she had no idea of its value, and none of her charities prospered, except so far as her rosy, good-natured face could be seen, for that, to be sure, did good like a medicine.

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And she was not a stupid girl, though certainly not brilliant in mathematics. If she had been taught that arithmetic is positively needed by every girl, rich or poor, she could have learned all she needed to know of figures to make her life a blessing to hundreds of people whom she only injured for lack of such knowledge.

A vast amount of the daily comfort of people of narrow means depends on the understanding the mother of a family has of accounts, so that the real needs and pleasures may be provided for without the contraction of debt. In a rich family the burden of the mother's incapacity for figures does not fall directly on those dearest to her, but it has unconsciously a far greater weight in the world at large, and is one of the chief among the unrecognized elements causing the increasing bitterness between the rich and the poor.

Let every girl, rich or poor, be required to keep her own accounts accurately from the time she is old enough to have an allowance of even ten cents a month, and there would be a perceptible amelioration in some of the hardest of present conditions.

I believe that some music should be included in a practical education,—certainly if a girl has a taste for it. The ability to sing hymns and ballads, and to play accompaniments well, adds so much to the happiness of a woman herself, and usually to that of her family, that it ought to be considered as something more than an accomplishment. I should not wish to be understood as limiting a musical education to these requirements. I should like to have every girl carry her education as far as she can without neglecting duties she feels more important. Even when she has no musical talent, but merely a love for music, though she cannot give much pleasure to others, I think she may get an elevation of mind from stumbling through Beethoven and Wagner which is worth the time she spends. Still, I think singing is of more practical use than instrumental music, and the power to play simple things well which is so rare is in most cases more to the purpose than to stumble through Beethoven and Wagner.

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Drawing is practical as it trains the eye and hand, but unpractical if it leads a girl to think her commonplace pictures are works of art. It seems to me that a good way for girls to study art is for them to look at good pictures with older people who have taste and judgment, because this gives them new resources of enjoyment. Of course when a girl has special talent she needs the training which will give her the power to produce, but this chapter is devoted to the general education of girls.

Every girl should study at least one science. Science trains the mind in a different way from other studies. And one science sheds light on all the rest. Then, anything which puts cheap pleasures within our reach is a safeguard and a blessing. The happiness of life is no light thing, and those who have tested it know how much simple happiness comes from the pursuit of botany or ornithology or mineralogy.

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It would be a great thing if every woman could be so well educated that she could teach her own children, at least the main branches, up to the time when they are twelve years old. This is by no means saying that it is not well for many children to be sent to school, but it is calling attention to a great privilege which some mothers and some children may enjoy. What ought a woman to be able to teach her children? To read, in the broad sense, to write a legible hand, and to speak correctly. She ought to be able to teach them arithmetic, and also the rudiments of one science, to give them in early life the right outlook upon the world around them. She ought particularly to be able to give them fine manners, but these belong to the moral training which was spoken of at the beginning of the chapter. They do bear, however, on that part of the social life which may not be distinctly moral, but which is of high practical importance to one's success in life, as well as to one's happiness. Many of the noblest women are shy and awkward except with their special friends, and so are unfitted for practical life. Mothers should remember this and make a determined effort to give children the practice of meeting many people, though, of course, the kind of people and the conditions under which they are to be met require careful consideration.

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As for the entirely moral qualities which contribute most to what is usually called success in the world, they are probably courage, good temper, thoughtfulness for others, perseverance, and trustworthiness.

And all this time I have said nothing of any use to be made of education in earning a living. Yet is not that just what our education must do if it is to be practical? I do not ignore this, and shall have more to say of self-support elsewhere. But on the principle that we eat to live rather than live to eat, I think even from a practical standpoint the full development of a woman is of more consequence than the amount of money she can earn. As far as the mere living goes, a practical woman can live better on a little money than an unpractical one on much. When her practicality comes from the high quality of her character, she will lead the best possible life whether she be rich or poor, and I believe the kind of culture I have outlined in this chapter will do something to add happiness to goodness and usefulness.

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#### IV.

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### SELF-SUPPORT.—SHALL GIRLS SUPPORT THEMSELVES?

I Once knew an agreeable girl whose great failing was her self-conceit. She was sure she could do everything anybody could do. As she did not look down on other people's efforts, she was amusing rather than annoying. She was always ready to write a poem, or sing a song, or paint a picture, and as she was a society girl and lived in a grand house, her little doings were often favorably mentioned in the local papers, so she may be pardoned for believing she had a variety of talents, though nobody who read her poems or heard her songs agreed with her.

Then came a crisis in her affairs. She was thrown on her resources without a moment's warning. She had to earn her living or starve. She had plenty of energy, and was willing to work. She took a rapid review of her powers. Then the scales fell from her eyes. She felt very doubtful if there was one among her accomplishments which would furnish bread for her. She would have said that all her conceit was gone. But it was not so. As her need was so urgent, she tried to find work first in one way and then in another. She was prepared to have the editors reject her manuscripts, and she was not surprised that she could not sell her pictures; but it was amazing to be told that her grammar and spelling were faulty, and it was hard to see the amusement in the faces of the art-dealers when they regarded her most cherished paintings.

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No woman can earn a living without some mortifying experiences, but the more conceited she is the more such experiences she meets, because she is inclined to attempt things preposterously beyond her. So this poor girl who had always held her head high was snubbed by everybody; she was told the truth with brutal frankness, and in time she learned her lesson. She was not a dull girl nor a weak girl. There was one thing she could do well at the outset, though she had so little discrimination in regard to herself that it did not occur to her that this would be her lever for moving the world. She was a beautiful housekeeper.

She remembered this finally and acted accordingly. I cannot say that she enjoyed her experience with a series of widowers, but she did her work well and was paid for it. She also had a talent—strange to say it was for drawing. She did not realize this either, for she could not discriminate enough to see that her amateur work as an artist was at all different from her amateur singing and playing. At first she had thought she could do everything well, and then she thought she could do nothing well. But by slow degrees, and through much tribulation, she began to set her faculties in order, and when she found her germ of a talent she cultivated it. Ten years later she was able to support herself as an engraver.

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By this time her one fault had vanished. She was simple and modest and self-respecting, while she retained the courage and cheerfulness which had made her attractive as a girl. "If you wish to cure a girl of conceit," she once said to a friend, "let her try to earn her living. As long as she does not ask to be paid, everybody will praise her work, but let her offer to sell her services and then see!"

I have not told this story to discourage girls who wish to be independent, but to show them the difficulties in their way. There is no doubt that every girl should be able to support herself. This very case makes it clear. But it does not seem to me equally clear that every girl should support herself, and certainly, if she does, it requires great judgment to select the way.

Fifty years ago women were very dependent, but now many avenues are open to them, and perhaps they have been urged almost too much to earn their own living. I will therefore speak of some circumstances in which it seems to me a girl is to be excused from that.

1. If she is rich, I think there are two objections to her earning money. One is trite and has been often answered. She should not take the bread out of the mouths of those who need it. I do not think this a very strong objection, because every one who works and produces anything adds to the wealth of the world, and sets others free to work for new ends. But one can do good service, without working for money, and, in point of fact, a woman who chooses any of the common ways of earning money usually does shut out some one else.

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To illustrate: I knew two school-girls who were classmates, both excellent girls. Martha was the best scholar in school. Lucy was rather dull, though not conspicuously so. Martha wished to teach, as her mother was a widow and poor. She applied for a situation in a neighboring town, but was told that some one had been before her, and though the matter was not then decided, the

school was at last given to the first-comer, who proved to be Lucy. Lucy's father was a well-to-do merchant whose name was known to the committee, and this settled the question. Lucy herself was quite innocent. She had no wish to interfere with Martha. Nor had she any special wish to teach. But she wanted a new silk dress, and she thought she should like to earn it. Her friends said she showed the right spirit and encouraged her. Martha and her mother suffered the most pinching poverty while Lucy was earning her dress, and when Martha at last found a place she proved to be a wonderful teacher, while Lucy was a commonplace one. It might, of course, have been the other way. If Lucy had been the gifted girl, then she certainly ought to have used her gifts, but not necessarily for money.

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This is one of many instances which lead me to think that if girls who are rich try to earn money they crowd out those who are poorer. They do, however, gain some things so valuable as almost to offset this objection; for instance, they are cured of conceit. I shall return to this subject.

The other objection to the earning of money by the rich is, that there is so much work to be done in the world which cannot in the nature of things be done by those who have to earn their living, that the rich cannot be spared for ordinary occupations. I shall give a special chapter to the work of the leisure classes.

2. There are many families of moderate means where one daughter, at least, can be supported at home without great sacrifices on the part of any one. This is true of almost every family where a servant is kept, for a mother and daughter together can usually do the work of a family more quickly and better than the mother and a servant. Now, if a girl has domestic tastes and is willing to work at home, it seems to me better for her to stay there, even with very little money, than to try to make herself independent elsewhere. If her tastes are not domestic, it changes the case entirely. Then let her go out and use the powers which have been given her.

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3. A girl is sometimes needed at home by an invalid father or mother, or she can help the children or make them happy. No general rule can be laid down, because no two cases are alike, but it is often true that a girl ought to give up not only earning money, but even using some of her powers, for the sake of doing still better work at home. And there are multitudes of instances in which she should not be urged to leave home unless she wishes it.

Practically a home life is a good preparation for marriage, which will be the lot of most girls. But though it is a good preparation, it is not the best. Every girl needs a broader outlook on life than she can get in her own home. If she is rich she can choose her way of getting it, by travel, or in charities, or even through society. But the best knowledge of the world is gained through the attempt to support herself. If her occupation takes her into new sections of country, it also develops her just as travel might do.

I am inclined to think that the ideal preparation for marriage would demand half a dozen years between school and the wedding-day, divided into three parts, given in order to a home life, to self-support, and to travel.

It is often said that a girl ought actually to support herself before she can be fitted to do so in case of an emergency. I remember the daughter of a wealthy man who went into a counting-room and worked several years for this reason. Her father said that as soon as she could live on the income she earned he thought the experiment would have succeeded and she might return home. At first it seemed as if it never would succeed. She was a good accountant and earned a fair salary. But she had been accustomed to spend more than most girls can earn, and she was loth to reduce her expenses just when she was working for money. By the end of the second year, however, she began to be tired of her work, so she rigorously kept within her salary for the third year, and then retired. Her experiment had been infinitely easier than if she had been obliged to make it without having other resources, but she had learned valuable lessons.

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It seems to me that if a girl who need not work for money does so she will do well to live on what she earns, at least for a time. To earn an extra silk dress does not seem an adequate object. I think if our accountant had gone on many years as she began she would not only have taken the place needed by some one else, but she would have made other accountants discontented because they could not dress as she did. She would have raised the standard of luxury among them without adding anything to their power to reach it.

I knew a young lady with a narrow income who for that reason chose to teach in a large school where several other teachers were employed at the same salary, namely, six hundred dollars. Everybody praised her judgment and taste, for she appeared to be able to do so much more than the rest with her money. Everybody said that six hundred dollars was a fine salary for anybody who had the wit to use it. Some thought a general reduction of salaries would not be amiss. Nobody knew of her reserve. The other teachers tried their best to do as well, but they grew discouraged and envious. Of course she was not to blame, but I think that in general the common welfare is best served when the wage-workers live on what they earn, at least while they are earning it. The surplus can be laid aside for the time when they are at leisure.

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But although I do not think that all girls should be urged to support themselves, the majority must do so, or they will burden others. There is also a large class of women who do not absolutely need to earn money, who nevertheless will be better and happier to do so. Independence is very

sweet, and even if for love's sake a woman chooses to give it up, it is more inspiring to make a deliberate sacrifice of it than to be dependent because she must be. All homes are not happy, even where the members of the family love each other and have a general purpose to do right. Perhaps it may be said that few young people are satisfied thoroughly with their homes. Would it not mean the destruction of the ideal if they were? It would be terrible to them to have the home broken up, and they do love their parents, but they think they could manage better, and may be right in thinking so.

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Now, if a girl at home has this feeling of unrest, she may be too ready to marry the first suitor, because she thinks more about the ideal home she can make than about the husband. If, on the contrary, she goes away and earns her living, she will look around her with less prejudiced eyes. If her home is really unhappy, she will be free from it. If its troubles are merely superficial, she will find this out as soon as she compares it with other homes. If she has not been willing to meet her share of trial and responsibility, she will now find that a change of place has not set her free, for the trouble was in herself. When she does go back to her home it will be with very different appreciation of it.

When a girl has become a woman her instinct leads her to long to be at the head of her own home, whether she is married or unmarried. To be absolute mistress even of one room in a lodging-house at the end of a day's labor is often better to her than to be at the call of everybody in her father's beautiful home where she is supposed to be at leisure all day. And this is right. If a girl has been badly trained, how can she help thinking she may do better than her mother does? If she has been well trained, she ought to be able to do better than her mother, for every generation begins at a higher point than the preceding. She has much of her mother's experience to help her while she is still fresh and strong and enthusiastic. There are very few women between the ages of twenty-five and forty who can be thoroughly contented in any home of which they are not the mistress, however patiently and nobly they may conceal their feelings. After forty they are often so tired as to be glad of any kind of a home.

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Then there are women with special gifts. I am thinking now of one who had a fortune, and yet chose to do the hard work of a physician. She had the aptitude for the work and the means for thorough study. She was among the most skillful physicians of her native city. She saved many lives, and relieved much suffering. She gave her priceless services to hundreds of poor people, but she did not give to those who could pay for them. I think she was altogether right. The world was better because she used her gift, and she was happier, as all are who exercise their powers.

Perhaps she blocked the way of less fortunate physicians. But this was because she gave a better gift than they could give. Certainly she had a right to give it even to the rich whose money could only buy a part of it. If she had served the rich without taking their money, she would not only have sapped their self-respect, but she would have been a more formidable obstacle in the way of poorer physicians. She would have been offering a premium in money to those who employed her, whereas the only premium she had a right to offer was her superior skill. It was because she could give priceless services that she had so clear a right to fix a price which she did not need.

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Suppose another woman her equal by nature, but who had not had the means for so complete an education, was set aside because she could not compete with one who had both the nature and the education,—even then the case would not be altered, for still the richer woman had a higher gift to give than the poorer one. It would be a bitter trial to the poorer woman to be met only by philosophy and religion; but if she were a just woman, she could not say that her rich rival had not done right.

When a beautiful young society woman of Boston consents to play at a concert every one feels it to be right, because few people can play so exquisitely. When she gives her services for some charity there is an especial fitness in it, since those who go to hear her wish to pay the high prices for the rare treat, and would still wish to do so if she were to keep the money for herself. But if she plays at a symphony concert, she certainly has a right to be paid as others are. That is a matter of self-respect. Why should she compete with other musicians on any unnatural basis?

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These instances will show what I mean by saying that a rich woman who has a great gift has a right to use it in earning money, when if the gift were smaller she might not be justified.

There are some qualities which are gained by self-support better than in any other way. By receiving money in return for service, we learn what our service is worth to others. We learn what we can do and what we cannot do. We exchange self-conceit for self-respect. With a true estimate of ourselves we learn how to estimate others more correctly. We learn the real needs of the world and the way to meet them. In a word, we learn justice.

It is generally supposed that the qualities in which men are superior to women are justice and courage. Courage, too, is cultivated by self-support. A woman who daily faces the outside world may not be braver than one who faces the little world at home, but she probably will be. At the last moment the woman at home may sometimes shirk a task which seems formidable to her, though she may be ashamed of her cowardice; but a woman who has agreed to do a certain thing for a certain sum of money cannot shirk, however frightened she may be, and by degrees she learns to subdue her terror and go cheerfully and calmly to her work.

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Furthermore, a woman who earns her money generally spends it more wisely than when it is given to her. She may not be as economical in all ways perhaps; but if she chooses to spend three dollars for a Wagner opera ticket when she has a shabby bonnet, because she loves music, she

may be putting the true emphasis on her purchase, which she might not dare to do if some one else supplied the money.

On the whole, I am inclined to think that most unmarried women, as well as many who are married, should support themselves. Where the necessity exists, it is base to shrink from doing one's part. When others of the family must endure privation to keep her at home, it is seldom that home is a girl's place. But I would not have a girl too eager to support herself. And I would not have her urged unless there is necessity. Above all, I would guard her from illusions.

It is not easy to earn one's living. It is true there are some delightful modes of making money open to the fortunate few. But if one earns all one spends,—which is the meaning of earning a living,—there will always be hardships to meet. It is not best to anticipate trouble, but it is cruel to let any girl try to make her way in the world with the fancy that it will be easy. Yet most must make their own way, and perhaps most of these have a fair share of happiness, for there are compensations in all work done in the right spirit.

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## V.

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### **SELF-SUPPORT—HOW SHALL GIRLS SUPPORT THEMSELVES?**

And now how shall a girl choose her occupation? And how shall she be fitted for it?

If she has a superb voice she may sing. If she has undoubted genius in any direction her decision is easy, whatever difficulty there may be in getting her education. Most people, however, have not genius. They can do some things better than others, and it is of great importance to their success and happiness that they should be able to use their natural powers to the best advantage. Still their gifts are not great enough to be perfectly clear at sight. It is only by careful cultivation that they become really available, and if a mistake is made in the line of one's education it is hard to repair it.

I think the course I have already described as practical for girls should be the foundation for the education of all girls, save in a few exceptional cases. If, in the end, a girl marries, her reading and cooking and housekeeping are all necessary. How can she use these homely accomplishments in earning a living?

They will not, to be sure, bring her a large income, but there is a steadier demand for good work in these directions than in any others. So a woman who has them is almost sure of a modest support. She need not go out to service to be a cook. Who has seen the dignified and refined Mrs. Lincoln giving lessons at the cooking-school without realizing that cooking may be a fine art, or who has read the cook-book of Mrs. Richards without perceiving that cooking may be an intellectual pursuit?

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But these women are exceptions. I will take a humbler example. I knew at school a stylish, energetic girl who was too dull to learn her lessons, but who had the air of polish which comes from association with educated people. Half a dozen years later she found herself obliged to earn her living. She had a little money, and she risked it in leasing a good house on a good city street which she filled with boarders. She worked very hard, and she had much to discourage and disgust her. But she knew how such a house ought to be kept, and she had the determination to keep it in that way. It will be seen that she was a rare landlady. Some landladies do not know how a house ought to be kept, and some have no clear purpose of keeping it as it ought to be kept when they do know the way. Therefore she had great success. There were always two applicants for every vacant room. Higher and higher prices were offered her. At last she bought her house. Then she laid aside money. By and by she had a comfortable fortune. She might then have retired from business, but she chose to go on. During the first five years of her career her experience had been so bitter that only necessity kept her at her post. But now she had learned how to meet her difficulties, and it was a real pleasure to her to see how well she could do her work. It was the work she was born to do, as certainly as Raphael was born to paint pictures.

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Few women are so successful; but at the present stage of the world I think it is true that no woman who thoroughly understands cooking and housekeeping need fear that she cannot support herself if she must. I knew a lady who excelled in these arts who was able to help her husband in establishing a school. He was a fine teacher, but too individual to work well in most schools. She took a dozen young people into the house and gave them a delightful home. Her husband earned the living of the family, and a very good living, too. She did little work with her hands, and an assistant teacher was employed to care for the pupils out of school. The housekeeping took but little time, and the lady was apparently almost as free as when her husband had been struggling along in a high school. But she understood so well what was needed that a word here and a look there kept all things smooth, and her husband who had seemed on the brink of ruin came out a successful man.

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But all who can manage their own homes cannot manage those of others, even if they are willing to do so. Suppose with all her practical education our girl never shines as a cook or a housekeeper! I have suggested that she should be so thoroughly grounded in primary school work that she could teach her own children till they are twelve years old. Then, if she has the

natural power to discipline, she can, if need be, teach a primary school. Now the number of primary schools to be taught is vastly greater than in any other grade, because all pupils must begin at the foot of the ladder, though most of them do not climb to the top. And it is doubtful whether competition among teachers of primary grades is proportionately great. I have heard of a leading normal school principal who decided to train his own daughter for primary work, because his experience showed him there was always a demand for such work. He said truly, "There are few schools which will pay much for unusual learning. Executive ability and tact in imparting knowledge are most wanted, together, of course, with thorough grounding in the rudimentary branches."

His daughter had both taste and talent for higher studies. He wished her to indulge her taste. "But," he added, "she must buy this higher knowledge as she would any other luxury, and not delude herself with the idea that it will make much difference with her power of earning money. If she earns her living by primary work, which requires little study out of school, she will have leisure to pursue her own tastes. Of course she may thus in time be fitted for higher work, and she may prefer to do it, and may even earn more money by it, but she will then do the work because it is her natural choice and not for the sake of the money." So altogether I believe that any girl who has the foundation education which will fit her for a home life will also be able to earn a respectable living if the need arises.

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I would not, however, have her stop there. A woman who has to work wishes to work to the best advantage, both as to the amount of money she earns, and the quality of the work she does. I believe every girl should have the simple solid foundation I have indicated, but I also think that in most cases a superstructure should be reared upon it, and that there should be almost as many forms of superstructure as there are individuals. Therefore, in choosing your occupation I will suggest this rule: Do not despise the lowest drudgery which comes plainly in your way; but always choose the highest work you are able to do.

For example, I knew a highly educated young lady who found it necessary to teach. She hated the work, as many teachers do, and yet she had a fine, forcible character, so that she did her work well. One day in a moment of vexation she was heard to exclaim, "I would rather be a waiter in a restaurant than teach school!" Now it happened that one of her pupils did become a waiter in the very restaurant which had called out the remark. And she made an excellent waiter. Her apron was always clean and her hair was always smooth. She was quick and quiet in filling an order, and modest and self-possessed and sweet-tempered. She did her work well and used her leisure well, and she deserved great praise. But in her case this was the best work open to her. She was a hopelessly dull scholar, and she was awkward with her needle. Nor did she have the kind of mind necessary to direct others. She could not have conducted a boarding-house. She could, however, do her own little bit of work well. Now what was fine in her would not have been fine in the teacher. To be sure, it is a pity to teach if one hates it, more of a pity than to do some mechanical work, because there is danger that the feeling may react upon the scholars. Still, this woman had the necessary self-control to do this good work. On the other hand, she was not attracted to any inferior work for its own sake. She would have made an excellent duchess. Her talents as well as her tastes fitted her for such a life. But she had to earn her living, and so far as she or her friends could see there was no direction in which she could work without finding it intolerable. And so it seems to me she did right to choose the best work open to her and do it as well as she could, and I think if she had forsaken the school-room for the restaurant she would not have done what was best either for herself or for others.

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I have known an ignorant woman who kept a lodging-house with such devotion that it was like a work of art. Its purity and freshness, its warmth and light had a charm beyond that of comfort. Such work is to be done, and it is not often done well, because the woman who does it is below rather than above her task. "Let the great soul incarnated in some woman's form, poor and sad and single, in some Dolly or Joan, go out to service, and sweep chambers and scour floors, and its effulgent day beams cannot be muffled or hid, but to sweep and scour will instantly appear supreme and beautiful actions, the top and radiance of human life, and all people will get mops and brooms; until lo, suddenly the great soul has enshrined itself in some other form and done some other deed, and that is now the flower and head of all living nature."

The lower work must be done, and often by the highest natures. It must then be done willingly and with a recognition that it can be made a work of art. But it should be deliberately chosen only by those to whom it is the highest work. I have in mind a young man who might have been a musician, but he would not practice, so he became a shoemaker. He had to work harder as a shoemaker than he would have done as a musician, but it was from hand to mouth. He did not have to work steadily towards a future good. He had no gift but that of music, so that even if he had been a musician he would have ranked far lower in the scale of manhood than the shoemakers of the village; but he would have done the best he could do, while as a shoemaker he was despicable.

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I knew a good teacher, capable of taking responsibility, who hated it so that she gave up work the moment she had acquired a miserable pittance. She lived ever after a pinched life, whose chief source of happiness to herself was the negative satisfaction of escaping responsibility; for she was too poor to gratify any of her many beautiful tastes. She had the power to lead a large, full life, but she had not the will and courage to meet the obstacles in her way. She chose instead to stunt herself and be a drudge. She swept her poor rooms clean, and she was willing to sweep them, but I do not think she "swept them as to God's law," for though she often made them "fine," I do not think she made "the action fine."



But such a case is rare. More people choose work too high for them. We all like to think we have some touch of genius, though we may be discreet enough not to say so. But few of us have talents at all equal to our tastes, and we must beware of trying to get our livelihood in the direction of our tastes rather than of our talents.

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One girl in ten thousand has the voice of a *prima donna*. Ten other girls in ten thousand have voices so good that they believe them to be like that of a *prima donna*. The first will succeed beyond her wildest dreams. She will have fame and fortune. The other ten will have some success, success which will seem great to the lookers on, but they will have heart-breaking disappointments within their own breasts. A hundred girls in the ten thousand have more talent for music than for most other things, and if they are well educated, they may perhaps make a good living as teachers, church singers, organists, or accompanists. This is not what they hoped, but they do the work that belongs to them, and on the whole may be counted successful. Another hundred like music, and can learn enough to add to their enjoyment and to that of those about them. They might even teach music, if the demand for teachers were not already filled by those who have a greater gift. But now it is clear their bread must depend on other work for which they have less taste. These are the "betwixt and between" who are always fighting a battle between taste and talent. They have a compensation,—they are less one-sidedly developed than if all their talents were concentrated in one; but they hardly realize this.

Now, how is the line to be drawn among the musical? Who are to earn their living by music and who are to be amateurs? Especially as fifty of our second hundred can with proper education easily excel fifty of the first hundred who have less education. Who is to decide whether it is prudent for a girl to spend all she has on a musical education with the hope of making herself independent in the end? No one can decide positively, but at least do not let any girl fancy that she is the one of ten thousand or even one of the ten. And let her ask for the judgment of more than one good musician before she is sure she belongs to the first hundred. If she loves music supremely, it may be worth while for her to spend everything on her education, even if she finally has to support herself with her needle, for it will be its own reward, and having tried to do what she believed to be her best, even her failure will not be a failure of character.

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If there is any occupation delightful in itself, there will always be many people who will hope that they have talent enough to make it a source of livelihood. We all wish to be musicians and artists and poets. The most bitter disappointments come to those who try these paths and fail. It has always seemed to me that where bread-winning is a necessity, we ought first to secure the means of living in some humbler way, and then there may be a chance to pursue these higher occupations for their own sake, and not to degrade them by false methods which we think will bring us money.

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I have heard of a poor girl who had a genius for acting. She went out to service while she was studying, she learned how to do housework well, and she had that resource always left to her in case she should fail on the stage. She succeeded, but she could not have succeeded if she had insisted on acting at the outset.

I knew a girl who had ability as a story writer. Two positions were open to her at the same time, one as a book-keeper, the other as writer for a certain department in a third-rate magazine. She chose to be a book-keeper, for she knew that if she took the magazine work she must write whether in the spirit or not, and that the rank of the magazine was such that she would have little encouragement to do her best. Of course, as book-keeper she had very little leisure. Stories germinated in her brain which she had no time to write; but when she was thoroughly possessed by a story, she did find time to write it, and her work was good. She chose to do the second best work for money, so that her best work might not be degraded by the need of money.

Few persons have genius enough to undertake any artistic work if they have a pressing need for the money they are to receive from it. With ever so small an income from other sources, they may cheerfully try their best and prove what they can do. But with no income at all, they will be too greatly tempted to prostitute the talent they have. Yet "if you cannot paint, you may grind the colors." Occasionally our cravings for artistic work may partially be gratified by doing lower work in the same line, and this may sometimes be a foundation for the higher work.

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A young girl had an ardent desire to be an elocutionist. She had a good voice, a flexible body, and some intelligence. She was willing to spend every penny on her education. Fortunately she had an unusually fine teacher, who told her the truth. He said, "You could easily learn the little tricks of voice and gesture which bring applause from ignorant people, and make one blush to be called an elocutionist, but you have not the dramatic sense and can never be a great reader. What you need to do is to study some literary masterpiece till you thoroughly appreciate it, and then read it as simply and clearly as possible."

"But would anybody come to hear me read?" she asked.

"I am afraid not," he said; "but you could teach reading."

This had not been her ambition, but she had an earnest character and was willing to read in the right way. She did take a place in a school and became a power there. She taught her scholars how to use the breath, to sit and stand easily and gracefully while reading, to enunciate clearly, and pronounce correctly. Moreover, she taught them to read noble poems instead of the flimsy showy jingles which had at first attracted her. She never made any figure as a public reader, but she did not regret serving the art she had learned to reverence on a lower plane.

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But, some one may say, suppose she had not been able to teach! She might not have understood the art of controlling scholars even if she understood what to teach them. In that case she might have been a private reader to some elderly or infirm person. There is a demand for private readers, but few can fill such a place, though we fancy everybody can read. Even where there is intelligence so that one is a pleasant reader, there are few who can manage the voice well enough to read several hours in succession as is often desired.

A woman with artistic tastes will probably do better service in studying ways of making beautiful homes or in lines of decorative work than by striving to paint great pictures. Let her paint the pictures if she is moved to do it and has time, and if they turn out to be great pictures that will be well; but until her greatness has been proved, would it not be better for her to depend for her support on the less ambitious departments of her art, especially as a beautifully planned home gives a higher artistic pleasure than second-rate painting?

It is strange that so few women are architects. Architecture is the sublimest of arts, and yet it has room to employ humble talents. A practical woman with a love of beauty, a mathematical mind, and a knowledge of mechanical drawing would undoubtedly be a great help to an architect in planning dwelling-houses. At any rate, as the matter stands at present, very few interiors are either convenient or beautiful in proportion to the money spent on them. A woman might not plan a public building well, but her help is needed in all our homes, and especially in tenement houses.

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I once knew a woman who was a poet. Her songs were full of beauty and helpfulness, but poetry is not lucrative. She took a position as teacher of literature in a girls' school. There never had been such teaching as hers in the school before. She showed the girls the poetic meaning of the great writers, and gave them a moral and intellectual impulse which lasted through life. Sometimes in an hour of inspiration she still wrote poems. Her teaching was so excellent that she was sought after in other schools. But she found that when she undertook too much her spirit flagged. She could still teach, but she could not write. So she went back to her first plan. Of course it was hard work. The girls were often dull and unsympathetic. Yet her study of literature helped her in her own great purpose of life, and the contact with youth was sometimes an inspiration in itself. Usually, however, teaching is an injury to a writer, because of the need of constantly adapting one's self to inferior minds.

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There are few women who can devote themselves to pure literature, and few of these can earn a living by it; so, delightful as it is, it can hardly be counted among the bread-winning occupations. But if a woman thinks she can be satisfied to work regularly on a newspaper or a magazine she may often earn a large income. If money or fame is her object she must always sign her own name to everything she writes, as it takes genius to coerce the public into admiration of anonymous work.

A great many women have found it well to be teachers, and most of their work is conscientiously done, though few have the highest ideal so constantly before them as to find pleasure in the work when their own faults are of such a nature that success depends on overcoming them. A firm, quick-witted woman, with sufficient self-reliance to relish responsibility, is the only one who can be happy in a large school or at the head of a small one. Now, those are the lucrative positions for teachers, and, indeed, the positions in which the largest results can be accomplished, and they ought to be filled by the finest women. But the finest women must have certain other qualities. They need to be thoughtful even more than quick witted; they must be able to balance conflicting interests, and that is hard to reconcile with firmness; and if they are modest and conscientious they rarely have the self-reliance which makes responsibility anything but a grievous burden. Yet there are teachers who have enough of all these contradictory qualities to succeed in doing the difficult and admirable work if they are only willing to be unhappy for the sake of doing something noble.

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But some can never be disciplinarians, however determined their character may be, principally, I think, because the true student must usually be occupied with a train of thought which cannot be interrupted from moment to moment to detect the petty tricks of insubordinate pupils. So if you mean to be a teacher, think first whether you have quick observation; then, are you firm, and are you willing to give your whole heart to your work? If you can answer these questions favorably, you may persevere in your attempt to make your way to the head of a school, even if your first trial does not succeed. If you have not the executive ability, then turn all your energy in other directions. There are positions as assistants in grammar schools where any woman of good education who is conscientious and persevering may in time work to advantage, and though such positions are probably more mechanical than any others, yet they often leave the teacher considerable freedom to pursue her own tastes outside of school.

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But if you feel that your temperament is essentially that of the student, so that you could fill the place of assistant in some advanced school, then give yourself to special studies. I would not say study history exclusively for ten years, even if you have a taste for history, because there are few schools where a teacher can be employed for history alone. But suppose you spent half your time for twenty years on history, and the other half on literature, languages, etc., you would probably find some place open to you all the time, and at the end of twenty years you might be fit for a college position, and much more fit than if you had narrowed yourself to one study. In most cases the bent in one direction is not so strong that the student cannot do many things fairly well. The half dozen best scholars in most secondary schools are usually the best in mathematics, in the sciences, in literature, and in language. It is a good plan for such scholars to "level up" in every direction. Two years' study in each line after leaving school will carry them beyond the

requirements of most schools,—though of course no teacher can hope to succeed who does not study daily the branches she teaches, to keep abreast of the times, and to make her teaching fresh,—and if she is able to teach a variety of subjects she is pretty sure to find an engagement in some of the many schools where only a few assistants can be employed. And it is no small additional advantage that her own mind is more evenly developed than that of a specialist.

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Just now the demand for women to teach the sciences seems to be greater in proportion to the supply than in any other direction. If a girl has a natural taste for chemistry, zoölogy, or mineralogy, and cultivates it, she is very sure to "put money in her purse." But the supply is increasing, so this state of things may not last long.

No one thinks sewing an attractive means of livelihood, but where a girl has a decided taste for the needle there are openings for her gifts. I know a mother and daughter who support themselves in comfort by embroidering dresses for the stage, and by giving lessons in the making of fine laces. And I heard the other day of a farmer's daughter who came to the city to work as a dressmaker, and who showed such taste and skill that she soon commanded a salary of two thousand dollars for overseeing an establishment. It is pleasant to add that she married a rich man of refined tastes, and that she made a beautiful home for him, a centre for all lovers of the fine arts.

A thousand occupations are now open to women. You can be a type-writer, or a stenographer, or a private secretary, or saleswoman. You can keep a bakery, or do city shopping for country ladies. But whatever you do, keep these principles in mind:—

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1. Do not drift into any work. Circumstances may force you to do something unsuited to you, and then you must do your best; but where even a narrow choice is left, try to weigh your own tastes and talents truly, and choose something to which you are willing to give your energies, and in which, if you work hard, there is reasonable hope you will succeed.

2. Whether you like your work or not, make it something more than a means of self-support. We all want "a broad margin to our lives," and we may do our great life-work entirely outside of our work for bread. But most of us necessarily put so much of our strength as well as our time into earning our livelihood, that, if we are the women we ought to be, that too must express our nobleness. We may not like our work, but we can make it worth doing, even if we never gain a penny from it. Milton was no doubt sorry to receive only £15 for "Paradise Lost," but we should all be willing to starve in a garret to do work like that. It ought to be the same with the humblest occupation. We should like to earn something by it, but first we wish to have it worth more than money, and it will be so if we work in the right spirit.

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## VI.

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### OCCUPATIONS FOR THE RICH.

In one of George Eliot's letters she says that her chief hope from the higher education of women is that they will do much unproductive labor which at present is either badly done or not done at all. But she thought it would be unbecoming in her to say much publicly on that subject, for she could not fail to know that her own genius set her apart from other women and gave her a definite work to do.

For those who have simply many good powers without any dominating one the case is different. The poor must use their gifts to gain bread; but if they do not make their occupation the medium of higher work, they are no better than the idle rich. The rich, instead of being excused from work by circumstances, are the more bound to work, because they can choose what is best in itself.

Where a girl has many equal gifts it may be well sometimes to have several occupations; but it is usually best to choose some one form of daily employment as the nucleus of her life, and to persevere with that till she accomplishes something.

Most girls would choose to devote themselves to some charity. I will speak of that in another chapter. Here I wish to say something of occupations which can be followed only by those who are rich enough to dispose of their own time, and which, though at first they may not seem to be of much use to others, are indirectly among the most powerful factors in the progress of the world.

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In New England, at least, girls often stay in school till they are twenty, and by that time they have learned the elements of chemistry, physics, botany, zoölogy, physiology, geology, and astronomy. If they have learned these thoroughly, the variety of studies is an advantage, as one science throws light on all the rest. Yet of course they have learned only the rudiments of any of these subjects, and if they try to carry them all on after leaving school they can hardly do very good work in any.

Suppose a girl decides that chemistry is the most fascinating of the group. Then let her make a special study of that. She will know enough of the other sciences to use them when she needs their help, or she may wish to study minerals or plants or animals chemically. If she is rich, she

ought to carry on her study with special teachers till she reaches a point where she can do original work. Then, let her have her own little laboratory, and give some hours every day regularly to experiments. "Original work" sounds terrifying to most girls; they think it requires genius. It does take genius to gather the results of experiments into laws. But as I have elsewhere suggested, the experiments must all be first tried; and many a girl is neat and skillful and accurate enough to do all the drudgery necessary, leaving the man,—or woman,—of genius free for the higher work. True, it takes genius to know what experiments to try. But a girl who has had special teachers is sure to know one among them who is doing original work, and who wishes the days were twice as long that he might try more experiments. Let her ask him to trust some work to her. She may make some discoveries herself, but at any rate she will do work which is needed.

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I call to mind a case in point. A young lady had a great taste for drawing, as well as a good scientific mind. She became acquainted with a physician who was making original studies in the microscopic germs of disease. They worked side by side. The physician detected the animalcules and plants and crystals with the microscope, and explained to her how he wanted them represented. She was intelligent enough to understand his explanations and skillful enough to make the drawings. His own drawings were too clumsy to convey his idea, but with her help his observations were made available for others.

Suppose a girl enjoys botany. I know a woman who has made lichens the study of a life-time. This has been a source of high culture as well as of pleasure to herself, for, as she says, this is the most intellectual family of plants, and no one can study their structure without being brought face to face with profound questions. Moreover, this study has opened her eyes and those of her friends to much beauty; for until we begin to look at lichens we are often conscious of hardly more than a dull wall of rock or the dead gray wood of old buildings, when in truth every inch of their surface is decorated with rich forms and delicate colors. She won a certain measure of fame by the discovery of a new lichen, but she did better than that, she made one of the finest collections in the United States for a local city museum, so that the fruits of her labor were thus accessible to future lichenists; and she gave much needed help to geologists in investigating fossil lichens.

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Local collections of any kind are valuable. A young lady who superintends the making of one in the town or village where she lives will learn much herself, and she will attract many other young people to pursue an innocent and healthful pleasure, so becoming a power in the community. There are few such collections now in existence, and any girl living in a small place who has a taste for science may act as a pioneer. She can begin modestly with a single case at her own house, or, better still, at the public library, and she will be surprised to see how fast the museum will grow, and how useful and delightful it will be.

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If a woman likes to experiment with plants, let her study botany at the Harvard Annex. There she will learn how many questions in vegetable physiology are awaiting investigation. Darwin studied one twining plant after another till he discovered the rate of motion for each. Dr. Goodale tells us how to trace the motion of ordinary growth. But think of the myriads of plants which have not yet been examined, any one of which is likely to yield suggestive results.

If a woman loves flowers and does not care for botany, she has the whole beautiful domain of horticulture open to her. Naturally she will have a garden of her own and be connected with some flower mission. But she might do more. A rich woman in the country who determined to make that her principal work could easily interest every child in the community in a garden, and by perseverance she might make the whole village blossom with new beauty. In the city she might be the means of making the balconies in whole streets lovely with growth.

I heard of a young lady not long ago who was raising spiders for the purpose of studying their habits. If she is in earnest, and has the intelligence to try experiments, she may some day contribute something substantial to scientific knowledge. I have heard of another who is raising snails, and of still another who makes a specialty of caddis-flies. Most people consider such work innocent and amusing, but it may easily be made more. Take the question of the antennæ of insects. It took the combined experiments of a German and an American to discover that the plumed antennæ of the male mosquito vibrated differently to different parts of the female's song, thus representing an outward ear. Now, of the two hundred thousand known species of insects, all of which have antennæ, probably less than fifty have been examined with anything like patience. These organs apparently serve in some cases for touch, and sometimes for smell. It will take years of study by hundreds of people to make the experiments necessary to decide on their relations to the senses and the brains of insects. When they are thoroughly understood, some light may be thrown on our own brain and senses.

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Who but the rich can have leisure for such important experiments? Yet any girl with a school knowledge of zoölogy could begin to work with some common insect, and be all the better for spending several hours every day in such a pursuit.

I know a lady devoted to zoölogy who has many opportunities to travel. She comes home laden with rare specimens which she distributes to all the people she knows who can appreciate them; and another who has given several years past to the study of geology. She has now become so accomplished as to have made an excellent geological map of the town she lives in. Such a map is greatly needed in any town, but how few are to be found!

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Another lady who has a taste for mineralogy has unconsciously done good in her own village by

means of it. All the boys and girls in town are ready to help her and have learned something from her. Her collection is open to everybody. She has formed a club of ladies for the study of the science in the winter evenings. There is a higher intellectual and moral tone in the place because of this new interest.

Goethe makes one of his heroines a lover of astronomy; he represents her as living quietly with her telescope, and passing night after night in close study of the stars. There is something ideally beautiful in his description of her.

One of my friends chose to give most of her time to music. Without being a genius, she played remarkably well, and she made her work available for others by playing the organ in a church which was rich, in everything but money. I knew another fine pianist who gave lessons to children who could not otherwise have had them. In both these cases the ladies were as much bound by their self-imposed tasks as if they had been earning their living, and their characters received almost as great benefit; but it would not have been well that they should be paid for their work. Why should they compete with those who needed the money?

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Harriet Martineau was not rich, but when she settled down in her own little country-house she had a competence. She made her study useful to the people around her, as well as to the world. She was skilled in political economy, and she took pains to present its knotty problems in a clear and simple form to the untrained minds of her poor neighbors.

All women are not born to lecture even in this small way. But the study of history, and still more of philosophy, does something more than to broaden the mind of the student. A woman with a clear mind looks at every subject more wisely than if she were half educated. Her judgment has weight with every one she comes into contact with; but however little her influence may be, it is likely to be on the right side. What we are is so much more than what we do! Girls who are longing to do some great thing are impatient when they are told this. It is so much easier to measure what we do than what we are. I know a girl with a fine intellect who loves to study, but who cannot quite give herself up to study because she is haunted by the feeling that in this way she is concentrating her life on herself. It is true there are learned women who are very selfish, but it is not true that their learning makes them so, certainly it is not, if they think and judge as well as learn. This girl believes she ought to visit the poor, and some time she may do some good in that way; but her natural aptitude is in another direction. If she ever succeeds in so disciplining her intellect that she has just views of life, she will have it in her power to exert a wide influence. If she could, for instance, convince her imperious father and brothers that there was something to be said on the side of their striking workmen, she would indirectly do the poor more good than she could ever do directly. Perhaps she could convince them. One reason that her father is so eager to grind men down is because her mother is frivolous and extravagant.

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I call to mind a girl who has been studying art abroad for some years. She has talent enough to earn her living by her work, if that were necessary. As it is not, she has chosen to do a fine thing. She has made copies of many of the great paintings of the world, and she has given these to the quiet boarding-school where she was educated. The copies are good enough to be a factor in the education of the girls who have not yet seen the originals. She has also used her skill and taste in selecting almost a thousand unmounted photographs from the great masters for the same school. These she has arranged herself, mounting them and writing out plainly on each card the name of the picture with that of the artist and a few words referring to the time and place of the painting. As arranged, these photographs form an illustrated history of art.

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Another girl perhaps chooses to study languages. When this leads to the foreign literatures, it is one of the highest intellectual occupations possible. But there are ways of making languages outwardly available. I remember a friend at a custom-house who successively helped three steerage passengers out of unknown troubles by speaking French, German, and Italian with them, and interpreting to the officers, one of whom at last turned with a laugh, saying, "I wonder if there are not any Chinese about. This lady would be sure to help them."

Translation, as everybody knows, does not pay. A few very famous books are brought out by the half dozen leading translators, and all others must either lie unread or be translated by those who do not need any money for their work. Yet there are books which ought to be translated, though they will not pay. And how rare it is to translate well! Even rarer than to write English well. If a woman is aware that she has grace in expressing herself, and a delicate perception of the meaning of words, and the power to comprehend the thought of a writer, then can she do better with time and money than to perfect her knowledge of a language so that she can make a good translation of some fine book which would otherwise be neglected? If she should also have some poetic gift, she might even translate poems which ought to be known. Probably no poem was ever poetically translated for money.

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There is another occupation for rich women more exclusively womanly—the care of children. I remember a rich mother who did this work well. She had a nurse, indeed, to relieve her of some of the drudgery, though she did not shrink from this, too, when it was needed; but the greater part of the day was passed with her children. She knew what words they heard and what actions they saw. She identified herself thoroughly with them. I will not say that she knew all their thoughts, but I think she knew all they were willing to express to any one. She entered into their

games and taught them to play. But though she was so much with them she did not let them feel that she had no other uses for her time. She read or wrote or sewed at one end of the long nursery, while they played at the other. She tried to develop their independence, and she trusted them little by little, more and more, as she saw they had strength to take care of themselves. She studied their characters, and gave much thought to the way to correct their faults. Sometimes a single word of reproof or command was the result of hours of thought, but they could not know that. At last they seemed to be thoroughly self-governing. They did the right thing instinctively, whether she was there to see them or not. If they were in doubt they came of their own accord to ask her advice, not requiring her command.

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By degrees she separated herself from them for most of the day simply to teach them self-reliance, not because she was tired of her task. The hours of separation were still given to them. She thought of them and studied for them, and planned ways of making herself most charming to them when they were together again. In the end they were free strong men and women, able to stand alone, and yet enthusiastically attached to their mother, so that every pleasure was the dearer if she shared it.

If a woman has no children of her own, it often happens that she may do this good work for her little brothers and sisters, or for her nieces and nephews. Or, if there is no one among her kindred who needs her care, there are always the orphan children.

If a woman of wealth and leisure adopts a child the experiment usually fails. I have often wondered why, and I think I can see the reason. A rich and cultivated woman who has also the large heart which leads her to take a child belongs to the very highest development of the race. The destitute waif is often from the dregs of the people. The distance between them is too wide for sympathy. She trains this child as she would train her own, and the child feels oppressed. Its faults are so different from those of her own childhood, that she is overwhelmed by them and quite at a loss how to meet them. And yet, it would be a pity for her to repress the generous wish to help a child. I think such a woman may sometimes find the child of educated parents, perhaps from among her own circle of friends whom she can naturally help; and if she will take two children instead of one, her task will be lightened for they will help each other.

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But if she finds it best to adopt one of the lowest class, she may still succeed by remembering several things. 1. It is too much to expect to train such a child to be a real companion, though in some rare cases this may follow. Her main effort should be to awaken and guide the moral nature, and to do this she must learn to look at the child from another standpoint than her own prejudices. 2. She must give the child an abundance of simple physical pleasures, and, if possible, companions of about its own intellectual grade. 3. She must enter heartily into all the child does, and endeavor to understand the workings of its mind.

Many young women who would hesitate to take the whole responsibility of one child may find useful and pleasant employment for themselves by teaching a class of children of the poor. They can teach them to sew or to read, they can provide simple pleasures for them, and supplement the work of the public schools in a hundred ways necessary in cases where there is no adequate home life.

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There is another great work to be done by rich women—that of giving a higher tone to society. I knew a delicate woman who went to live in a large and rapidly growing Western city. On account of her wealth and connections all the leading people in the place called upon her at once, and her house became a centre of society. She used her good taste in making her home really beautiful—not showy or fashionable. Then she opened it freely to congenial friends. Some of her visitors were society people, but many were not. There were thoughtful teachers, clever young collegians who had gone West to seek a fortune and had found drudgery awaiting them instead, half a dozen unknown musicians and artists, and a few educated Germans and Swedes whom fate had stranded far from home. These people were welcome every day and at all hours. For this lady, who had intellectual tastes, had been forced by the weakness of her eyes to get her education from people rather than from books. So a perpetual *salon* was a pleasant thing to her. All who were invited to her home had some moral or intellectual gift which made their company desirable, not only to the hostess but to the other guests. The rich and poor met together there, but not the cultivated rich and the uncultivated poor, or the uncultivated rich and the cultivated poor. Consequently, the conversation was real. A young professor would come in with the "Atlantic Monthly," begging leave to read an article to her, and the reading would begin without any superfluous remarks about the weather. Others would come in, but the reading would go on and the discussion it suggested. An artist would bring a new picture, and the conversation would turn in a new direction. A musician would sing an air, and a quiet German would be led to speak of his life in the Fatherland.

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But with all her leisure, my friend found it a burden to keep up the round of merely formal calls required of her. She did not wish to hurt the feelings of any one, so she persevered for a while. She set apart one day in a fortnight for a reception day. (You may be sure none of her bright and interesting friends came then.) And once a fortnight she took her card-case in hand and drove rapidly about the city, returning calls. But she seldom called formally on anybody who had once been asked to her *salon*. These were the people, she said to herself, who could *understand*.

Her delicate health excused her from giving parties. Coffee and cakes were always at hand for refreshment, and any caller was welcomed to lunch or dinner if he happened to be at the house when the bell rang. The dinners were always good, but no change was made for a visitor. She always refused to go to parties or receptions, which she thought insufferable except when there

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was dancing. But she could not escape the burden of party calls. The difficulty in carrying out her plans was that there was no definite line between her sheep and goats. There were some with whom she had to be both formal and informal, and she knew it could not be right for her to drop totally everybody whom she did not fancy. Many other women had felt the same burdens too heavy to be borne, but had seen no escape. She suggested a club-house for ladies in some central part of the city which they all often passed in shopping. It should be a comfortable resting-place, with restaurant, reading-room, etc. It should always be open, but one afternoon in the week should be considered a special reception day. That would give ladies a chance to see each other with very little trouble. When a stranger came into town, if it was thought she would be a congenial acquaintance, two members were to call upon her and invite her to the club, and see that she was properly introduced. Then she was considered one of their number, and was free from the bondage of calls ever after. There were many other regulations emancipating the members from the tyranny of unsocial society. Of course many ladies objected to all this. Their idea of society was the conventional one, and they continued to live on that basis. Most of them were welcomed at the club, but its members did not call upon them, or go to their parties, or give them parties in return, always excepting parties with an object like music and dancing. Parties had given place to informal gatherings like my friend's *salon*, where something real could be said.

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Now in an old city such a change could not be brought about so quickly. It could only be made by a large number of leaders of society joining to make it. No stranger nor young person could do much except to make her own part of any conversation as worthy as possible. But the mothers can lead the daughters, and the daughters, starting from a higher point, can go on in the same way.

These are some of the many unproductive occupations in which rich women may use their time well, without finding it necessary to compete with their poorer sisters in earning money.

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## VII.

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### CULTURE.

"Culture comes from the constant choice of the best within our reach. It belongs to character more than to acquirements, though a person of culture usually has certain acquirements, for these are generally within the reach of all those who earnestly wish for the best things."

A woman, for instance, may be a cultivated musician, and have a weak character in some directions; but just so far as her music is of high quality she must have chosen the best. She must have been patient and energetic, and she must have been willing to practice fine music. I knew a girl so brilliant that she was able to play a Beethoven sonata almost at sight when she had studied music less than a year. But she did not care for Beethoven. She preferred Offenbach, and she never became a cultivated musician.

But though girls are apt to think of culture as something distinct from character, they do after all acknowledge its moral side, for beautiful manners are its first test. I see every day a young girl who seems to have no special gift. Her delicate health has prevented her from studying much, so although the wealth and position of her family have made it possible for her to have the best teachers all her life, her education is not far advanced. With all her piano lessons she will stumble over the simplest march if any one is listening to her; she replies to her French teacher in monosyllables; she has read few books; and as for her arithmetic, children in the primary schools could put her to shame. Nevertheless, she would everywhere be recognized at once as a cultivated young lady. The simplicity, gentleness, and sweetness of her manners, her truthfulness, modesty, and dignity count for far more than French or music or literature even with those who lay most stress on accomplishments. Such manners as hers are rare, and yet they are likely to be found running through whole families. Her mother and her sister, both of whom are cleverer than she, have almost equally fine manners, though they miss the last touch of grace. Such manners come from the choice of generation after generation. One woman after another has chosen to be sincere, good-tempered, kind, and noble. The women who so choose also choose the best in other ways. They read good books instead of bad ones, they prefer a beautiful picture to a showy one, and Beethoven to Offenbach. You may say that a girl of such a family cannot help being cultivated: culture is inborn. So it is, because generation after generation has chosen aright. Her own positive contribution to the family is that last touch of grace. I think that comes from the fact that she could not succeed in other directions as her mother and sister did. The best within *her* reach was in the direction of manners, though I think she did not decide that consciously. It was the determination to meet mortification with heroism, to turn aside from feelings of envy and wounded vanity, which added the last exquisite charm to her manners.

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That such manners are often found among people of some wealth may, I think, be accounted for by choice. Though many poor people are not at all responsible for their poverty, yet when generation after generation choose the best things, including the best husbands and wives, some of the sources of poverty are removed, and although such families are seldom very rich, they are often in comfortable circumstances, and as they use money as well as other things in the best way, and do not live for show, they are really richer than others with the same means.

I think, on the whole, good breeding is found oftenest in families where the fathers have been professional men for generations. A line of ministers where each has chosen to do the highest work he knew, careless of money, or a line of physicians where each has chosen to help his fellow-men, leads down to a beautiful blossoming time.

But no class monopolizes fine manners. Sometimes they seem to belong entirely to the woman herself, and no trace of them can be found in an earlier generation. She chooses alone, and she accomplishes all that has been accomplished for others by cultivated ancestors.

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Truthfulness is essential to culture, which, without it, will be only a veneer. I have had an opportunity to know well a large class of girls selected from the most highly cultivated families in one of our cities. Comparing them with other sets of less highly cultivated girls, I think, on the whole, the standard of truth is higher among the first, though it has never been my misfortune to find a low standard among girls. Unhappily, however, these girls have been so encouraged to shirk mathematics that they have little power to think justly and accurately on many questions. Mathematics may be called narrow, but no one can have sound intellectual culture without these mental gymnastics.

I believe, too, that science must have a larger place in the education of girls if they are to be able to look at things in a broad way, and if I am right in calling culture the result of choice, the fairness of judgment which comes from broad views is more essential to it than any special accomplishment.

A specialist is seldom really cultivated, just because he is a specialist. Darwin when young was an enthusiast in music and poetry. But after a life given exclusively to science, he was amazed to find that Shakespeare was tedious to him. His services to the world were so great, and the spirit in which he worked was so noble, that we can hardly regret his course; but he said himself that if he could begin life again he would read some poetry and hear some music every day, so that he might not lose the power of appreciating these things. Goethe, who stands at the opposite extreme, as the "many-sided," adds that one must see something beautiful every day.

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Women are seldom specialists however. Their danger is superficiality through trying to do too many things. How can we be broad without being superficial? I have elsewhere said that I believe the school education should include the rudiments of many branches, and that these rudiments should be so thoroughly mastered that the girl should be able to go on with any study by herself. I think the education should be continued along several lines, if possible. These will differ with different women; but whatever they are, it is essential that a balance should be kept between beauty and truth. Music, art, or poetry on the one hand, and science or history on the other, seem to me to give what is most needed. In Elizabeth Shepherd's books the formula *Tonkunst und Arznei*—music and medicine—is often quoted, and so we should get the proper balance. I do not think that an ardent girl who loves music art, and poetry, and who hates history and science and mathematics, will ever quite do herself justice if she carries on all three of her favorite studies and ignores the others, even though her favorites are most essential to culture. I think, however, that though mathematics cannot be spared from the foundation of an education, it yields less culture on the whole to students who have no taste for it than any other study, so I do not advocate carrying it far, but history or some science would be a good counterpoise for a mind given to the study of beauty alone.

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A friend says we must all be one-sided, so that perhaps our best chance is to have one hobby at a time and ride that to death, and then try another, becoming at last two, three, or four-sided, though never completely rounded. If that be the case, it seems to me a good thing to choose some of our hobbies at least from among the subjects for which we have most taste and talent. Now where the opportunities for culture have been great, it often happens that girls grow discouraged. They see how far away they are from perfection, and they conclude they are good for nothing. Do not yield to such morbid feelings. Make your own estimate of yourself, without regard to your wishes. You do in your heart know what you can do well if you are willing to work.

Make your estimate silently. It will probably be too high, but you will work in the right line. Then let half your work be in the direction in which you think you may make your life outwardly effective; for instance, if you are a Darwin let it be in the line of natural science. Let the other half of your work be constantly varied. Suppose you have chosen history as the study for a lifetime, take as a companion study something new every year,—first a science, then art, then literature, then mathematics, then a language, etc., etc. For the fruit of culture is to be and not to do; and what we are, intellectually at least, depends even more on the breadth of knowledge which helps us to balance conflicting judgments than on special knowledge which gives us accurate judgment in details. Even in the moral world, are not the finest characters those in whom many virtues are balanced rather than those in which one virtue is distorted by being allowed exclusive sway? It is a great thing to be generous, but not to be wasteful; it is great to be gentle, but not to be weak.

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The philosophers tell us, however, that all things move in an ascending spiral. We do in order to be. What we are bears unconscious fruit in what we do. A woman who is cultivated in the true sense exerts a constant influence for good. One rich woman says, "I will not live to myself," and gives clothing to ragged children. Another rich woman says the same thing, and studies history and poetry and comes silently to just conclusions about the relative value of clothes and thought. She cannot be unjust to her smartly dressed maid, and her daily life lifts her maid into a new moral atmosphere; or her gently expressed judgments on all things are so unswervingly on the side of truth and love that her father and brother become ashamed of their little tricks in

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business or politics which they had once thought trifles. True culture does always react on life.

And yet in one direction culture seems to weaken the moral fibre. The kind of courage which leads to quick heroic action in great emergencies is apt to be lost by the habit of balancing arguments for and against action. The gentleness which comes from quiet study often makes one incapable of decision when severity is necessary. I was shocked not long ago by hearing a group of sweet, high-bred girls discussing the scene in "William Tell" where the wife of the hero tries to prevent him from going out with his bow and arrow while Gessler is in the neighborhood. With one accord the girls thought Tell should have yielded to his wife's wish. It is true she was right in regard to the danger, but Tell's carelessness about it was so clearly the result of his high-minded freedom from suspicion that it seemed as though every heart should beat quicker at his nobleness. These girls have moral courage. I dare say some of them would die at the stake rather than tell a lie. But it would take a sharply defined test like that to rouse them. Too much thought has made it difficult for them to take any risk through unconsciousness of danger. They could not act freely and spontaneously, and they could not even admire such action in others.

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How shall we train our girls so that they may have just judgments and yet not make them so introspective that the bloom shall be brushed off the beauty of every action? Perhaps Emerson's suggestion, that every young person should be encouraged to do what he is afraid to do, would meet the case.

In a city like Boston there is a great temptation to undertake too many lines of study at once. There are free lectures every day in the week from men who have mastered their subjects, and it seems as if one might lie still and drink in all knowledge without effort. There are lectures in private parlors for those who are too delicate to go to a public hall—elementary lectures, and advanced lectures and readings. But no one ever became cultivated by going to lectures. If a girl would choose a single course and study the subject between times by herself, then she would really be the better for the instruction. I think the difficulty of choice among many good things in the city is the reason that so many earnest girls have dissipated minds. A woman in the city must be constantly on her guard against this peculiar temptation.

Perhaps at this point it will do no harm to insert a few commonplace rules for study.

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Do not try to study too many things at once.

Try to do all your work thoroughly, even if you do not get beyond the rudiments in anything.

Do not be in a hurry.

It is said that eagerness to finish things shows weakness. It certainly leads to shallowness, "Without haste, without rest" was Goethe's motto. I have heard of a woman who began to study botany at ninety. That shows a mind so trained and cultivated that the soil could not be exhausted with age. How good it was that she was still fresh enough to respond to new thoughts! She might have learned as much botany in a course of lectures when she was twenty, and have listened to a dozen other courses at the same time, without half the delight and inspiration she had at ninety; that is, receiving so many new ideas at once at twenty might have made her mind more jaded than the gradual, steady unfolding of many more ideas during a lifetime.

I know a lady of forty-five who within the last month has taken her first piano lesson. She did not even know the meaning of the letters, and yet she has already made wonderful progress. She will probably never become a great player, though her fingers are unusually supple and she has some musical ability. But even if she does not, a new world of thought and beauty is opening to her.

I have just heard of another lady of seventy who went abroad for the sake of learning the French language.

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It is a great mistake to think that all we are to learn must be begun before we are thirty lest we may not have a chance to make a practical use of it. Culture is within and not without.

I hope that I shall have as many readers in the country as in the city, and country people are not distracted with opportunities for culture. Indeed, they often think they have none. I will tell you the stories of three cultivated country women.

One lived on a farm a mile from the post-office, and there was not much money for her to spend. There were half a dozen cultivated families in the village including that of the minister, and among them were to be found most of the books which make the best literature. She knew how to use both these friends and these books, and at twenty she was better read than her Boston cousins. As she did not see her friends often, she was more careful to make every call tell, and her visitors said it was delightful to go to see her, she had such fresh things to say to them and such interesting questions to ask. She studied botany by herself and became expert. She learned mathematics so well in the public school that when she began to think she would like to see something of the world outside her corner, she was able to get good places to teach. First, she went to a seaside village and there she learned a thousand new things. Then she spent a few

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years at the West, varying her route in going and coming till she had seen a large part of her own country. By this time she had saved enough money to go abroad and study quietly for a year. Now, she had her French and German, and she saw pictures and heard music and visited cathedrals and discovered how other people lived. But by and by her sisters died, and she was needed at home. Of course she was a great acquisition in the village, and she had many sources of enjoyment in pursuing the studies she had begun. But she wanted new thoughts too. She invited a friend to spend a month with her, and when she found that her friend had made a study of chemistry she sent for a few dollars' worth of chemicals and set up a satisfactory laboratory in the barn. Naturally she made the acquaintance of every desirable person who visited the village, and moreover her Boston relatives were always eager to have her for a guest, as she was interested in all their favorite pursuits in an entirely original way.

Another girl lived in one little town till she was thirty, and then married a man of culture whose home was in the city. His sisters said she was a beauty and had good taste in dress; and they thought these things had captivated their brother. But first they had to own that she was a woman of fine character, good-tempered, dignified, truthful and modest, for these virtues flourish in the country quite as often as in the city. But still, they knew that she had had no education, and they expected no intellectual companionship. Then it proved that she had read more thoughtfully than they had. They belonged to a dozen literary societies, but the one little village Shakespeare Club had done good work. The sisters always went to the theatre every week in the winter, but the bride who could count on her fingers the plays she had heard, had selected these so carefully that her taste was already well formed. Then she proved to be musical. Small as the village was, there had been one young lady in it who had had the best musical advantages. Our heroine had not let this opportunity slip. She had not heard many concerts, but she had practiced the best music. She had studied Latin, of course, in the village high school, and French with a French lady who spent her summers in the neighborhood. She had treated herself every year to five dollars' worth of Soule's photographs, and she had studied these so carefully that she really knew something of the great artists.

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Then she had traveled! She had begun to teach in her own village when she was eighteen, and every summer she had spent a little of her salary in some interesting trip. As a teacher, she had taken advantage of excursion rates to the great National Teachers' Institutes. In this way she had visited most sections of the United States. And she had planned her trips so thoughtfully that she had been alive to everything which was to be seen. Once she had even taken the accumulations of several years and spent her summer abroad. The sisters looked scornful at this. How could anybody see anything worth seeing with an excursion party? Yet they had to own that what we see depends on the eyes we have as much as on our surroundings. She could not see everything in three months, but she knew what she wanted to see, and she had thoroughly assimilated that by much thought about it before and after the journey.

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She had once spent six weeks at a summer school of languages, and had devoted herself so energetically to German that she had been able to go on reading it by herself, and thus in a few years she had become familiar with some of the masterpieces of its literature. But the sisters were most astonished when they found her reading Italian one day—Dante, too, which was too hard for them. The explanation of this was that for some years the Catholic priest in her native village had been a good-natured Tuscan who had been glad to exchange Italian for English with her.

You see, she had had no regular education and no money but what she earned, yet by choosing the best within reach at all times she had become as cultivated as her sisters-in-law who had had every opportunity.

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All women are not so fond of study; but they may be cultivated, nevertheless. The finest manners I have ever seen belong to a woman who has lived all her life in the house where she was born in a little town in New England. She never went away to school, and has not the student temperament, though she is gifted in every direction. She has a love of beauty which has led her to make everything beautiful around her. She has had little musical training, yet her playing and singing have always had the indefinable musical quality. She has read a good deal, especially of the best novels and poetry, but "All for love and nothing for reward." She has traveled from time to time a little when she could spare the money, but always for pleasure and not to improve her mind.

She has had no artistic training, but with meagre materials she arranges tableaux which are famed throughout the county, and on every public occasion in the village she decorates the Town Hall exquisitely. She has added wonderfully to the happiness of the place by always following her love of beauty, making everything she touches beautiful without any pretense or even any consciousness of having a mission.

So women may be cultivated in the country as well as in the city. But some one may say that the hard workers have no time for culture. It does seem to be true that hard workers need to use more sagacity than others not to let their work crowd out everything else. They have one advantage. Nobody can be really cultivated without learning some one thing thoroughly. This their work compels workers to do. And the building is more important than its decoration, though without the decoration it may be a sombre structure.

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Now, hard workers obviously cannot study French and German and Italian and music and art, at least all at once, and if they try and so crowd out all their little leisure, they miss the better culture which is within their reach. What must you who are hard workers take time to do?

1. Take a little time to think. Especially try to judge fairly in every-day matters. Culture, demands balance of mind; but is not that as good when it comes from thought as from study? If the subject in hand is one of which you do not know enough to judge, study it, if you have time. If not, suspend your judgment. That will show true culture. For instance, do not be a violent partisan either for or against the tariff unless you have carefully examined the arguments on both sides. Few perhaps have time to do that. You will still have an opinion. The few arguments you have studied all point in one direction. The people you trust most believe in one measure. Very well, keep your opinion. If you were a voter you might even vote in the way you believe to be best; but do not allow yourself to be violent or to denounce everybody whose judgment differs from yours.

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2. Try to be enough at leisure to observe little courtesies. Hard workers are in danger of being irritable and hurried and careless of the trifles which add so much to the beauty and dignity of life. Of course my injunction includes some social life. We get much of our best intellectual as well as moral life from contact with others.

3. Keep open every avenue to beauty. You have no time to study, but read a few beautiful and noble sentences every day. You have no time to practice music; then it is doubly necessary to hear all you can and the best that you can. And you can always look at beauty. There is always a strip of blue sky with its stars at night. And there are few who could not see a beautiful sunset almost every day in the year if they made it a happy duty to look at it. I have often thought that any one who would persist in seeing this one vision every day would be lifted up above most of the turmoil of life.

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## VIII.

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### THE ESSENTIALS OF A LADY.

Within the last twenty-five years the wish to be considered a lady has spread so among all classes of American women as to have become almost ridiculous, as in the authentic case of the individual who presented herself at the front door of a fine house, and describing herself as an *ash-lady*, inquired for the *woman* of the house. It has been so often repeated that: "The rank is but the guinea's stamp," and that "A man's a man for a' that," that all the ash-ladies and wash-ladies of the land have hastily concluded that the term "lady" stands for nothing substantial.

I will not say that a washer-woman may not be a lady. It is certainly possible for her to have all the essentials of a lady. But such a case is so rare that I think we are justified in taking the contrary for granted till we have proof of the fact. Not there are washer-women so truthful, unselfish, and noble in character that they are far superior as women to many whom we may fairly call ladies. Such women usually have self-respect enough to understand that they lose rather than gain dignity in claiming to be anything they are not. The essential point in life is not the being considered a lady. It is not even to be a lady, though that is a beautiful thing. A woman is like a vigorous plant, with strong roots firmly fixed in the soil and abundant fresh green leaves. A lady is such a plant crowned by a beautiful blossom. You have sometimes seen a plant, a geranium, for instance, which had lost all its leaves, and yet bore at the top of its crooked stem a cluster of flowers. Such flowers are not very beautiful. The thrifty plant without a blossom is more beautiful. Of course my moral is this, that while the term "lady" does mean something different from "woman," it is only as a crown of womanhood that it is really significant.

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Every girl should try to be a lady, however, and every girl who sincerely tries will have some measure of success. I remember when I was a girl, I once said to a high-bred woman, "Do you think, after all, that Mrs. A. is much of a lady?" She replied so firmly as to crush me for the time, "One is either a lady or she is not a lady." I supposed she was right, and that there were no stages on the perilous upward path which led to being a lady. I have changed my mind now. I think each of us may have some virtues without having all the virtues. I think with Emerson that in a society of gentlemen and ladies we shall find no complete gentleman and no complete lady; and so I say that every girl who tries to be a lady will have some measure of success. I do not mean that she should try to be recognized as a lady. If she is one she will probably, but not certainly, be so recognized. In a small community, where she can be known personally, she will be sure of her place, but not in a large town.

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Oliver Wendell Holmes, speaking in England, said something to this effect: "You think we have no classes in America because we have no titles to distinguish them. But a barbed wire fence is as effectual in keeping out intruders as one of boards, though you can see the boards and the barbed wire is invisible."

Why is a barbed wire fence put up in America? Because there is a real difference between coarse people and refined people, even when both have the best intentions. To be sure there are other less valid reasons. There are coarse people whom accident has put among the higher classes, who make themselves ridiculous by putting up a fence between themselves and poorer people even when the poor are refined. Nevertheless, there is a true basis for distinction of classes. Only the distinction is not as sharp as many would have it. The highly refined and the very coarse have so little in common that they can never associate with comfort. But the highly refined do not need barbed wire between themselves and those with one degree less of cultivation. We can always

reach one hand to those below us, and if we reach the other to those above us, we shall be able to lift the lower to our plane instead of sinking to theirs. Such a chain of love, reaching from the lowest to the highest, is the ideal society, and the highest man does not need to lift all his fellows up by his unaided strength, because there is infinite help above him.

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But in the unideal present most of us will sometimes be called upon to stand outside the charmed circle of barbed wire which incloses more fortunate mortals, in spite of all we can do for ourselves. We may be better women than those within the circle, we may be better-educated, more careful in our habits, and our manners may be finer, and yet we may not have the magic word which would admit us. There is no doubt, for instance, that blood and breeding do tell powerfully in refinement. I can think of half a dozen women, however, of no birth at all in the ordinary sense, and of no home education, who have blossomed into the loveliest and most refined of women. In one case, the ancestors had for generations been earnestly religious, so that the girl was really of noble birth and predestined to refinement, though she had nothing to help her in the world's estimation. But some of the girls came from wretched homes, some of them did not even have good mothers, and one was the illegitimate daughter of a servant girl. But they all had aspiration and intellect, and their refinement was not only wonderful under the circumstances, but wonderful under any circumstances. They were suitable associates for the most exclusive ladies in our cities so far as genuine refinement goes, only as their experience of life was much wider than that of these carefully guarded dames, perhaps they would not have assimilated very well with them after all.

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Of course, the exclusive circles are suspicious of women whose antecedents are like these, and perhaps they have a right to be suspicious, because these girls were certainly exceptions to the rule. At all events, none of us can help ourselves by grasping at a position. We may, to be sure, get invitations sometimes if we are vulgar enough to ask for them, but we shall find the barbed wire fence even in the drawing-room to which we have been admitted. We must be content to stand outside every circle till we are invited to enter it, and our self-respect must heal our wounded pride.

One thing, however, we can do. We can quietly resist being patronized. We are not often called upon to accept favors from those who are not our superiors but who condescend to us because we are poor or obscure. It is true we must be humble, and we need not resent such favors, but we must beware of being flattered by the notice of any one who is simply rich or powerful. When we recognize true superiority either in the rich or the poor, we ought to be glad to acknowledge it. We can accept a favor from those who are really above us, though we know we cannot return it. And we can always be ready to do our best work for others whether they slight us or not. That does not show a mean but a noble spirit.

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What are the essentials of a lady?

A knowledge of the manners of the world is generally considered necessary if one would be a lady. Even where customs themselves are trivial, ignorance of them makes a woman awkward and self-conscious, so that she does not have the grace we associate with a perfect lady. Etiquette is superficial, it is true, but it has a genuine value. The manners which belong instinctively to a woman of kindness and refinement are a far better test of her real rank.

I think, on the whole, a lady is most quickly recognized by her purity. Even a pure enunciation is a sign of a lady, for it gives a certain beauty of speech rarely heard except among those not only carefully educated, but brought up among those who have the same habits. And nobody is quite willing to pronounce any one a lady who is not exquisitely neat in her personal habits. These, to be sure, are only an outward and visible sign, but they point clearly to something within. Somebody is sure to remember a class of New England housekeepers who spend all their time scrubbing floors and have no spirit left for anything else, and ask if they have the visible stamp of a lady. The idea of neatness is so distorted in them that we cannot admire it very much, yet perhaps it is their one connecting link with refinement. Such women, however, are, curiously enough, seldom particularly neat in their personal habits. Their dress is often untidy, their hair uncombed, they are careless about bathing, and their teeth are neglected. Personal neatness is far more characteristic of a lady than neatness of surroundings, and cleanliness is better than order. The lover of "Shirley" says, "I have often seen her with a torn sleeve, but the arm beneath it was white."

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Somebody else will say that neatness is, after all, a luxury beyond the means of poor people. How can you be clean when you do dirty work? It takes either time or money. I know a wealthy lady who used to be poor, who says that for years she could never afford as much washing as she thought indispensable, and she was too much of an invalid to do her own washing. Nevertheless, she was always a lady and always looked like one, though her dresses were sometimes absurdly old-fashioned. I should say that her love of neatness was so strong that she sacrificed less important things to it, and always did reach a high standard, though not the standard of luxury.

I know a gentleman whose lot has been to do the heaviest and dirtiest work on a ranch for years, and yet his hands to the tips of his fingernails look as if he had just come from a manicure's. I suppose he has been determined that his hands should be clean and has been willing to take the trouble to keep them so. Still, we ought to make some allowance for poverty in our estimate of

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neatness. "Why are you building an addition to your house?" asked one lady of another. "Oh, for Mr. B.'s tooth-brushes," replied Mrs. B, carelessly. "When a man has been brought up as Mr. B. has been, his tooth-brushes take up a great deal of room."

I have said all this of outward purity, because it is easier to speak of this, but it is still more the purity of mind and character which distinguishes a lady. In some classes of society even in America girls are kept almost isolated chiefly to preserve their purity of thought. Purity, even the purity of ignorance, is beautiful, but such purity has not deep foundations, and I cannot think that girls are best guarded in this way. Nevertheless, purity is so essential to a lady that such girls will always be counted as ladies.

The love of beauty is characteristic of a real lady. This is recognized in some measure. Girls are taught dancing and music and something of art. They listen to good music even if they are not musicians, and they look at good pictures if they cannot paint them. This is partly a matter of fashion, but it has a genuine root. And so with the beauty of dress, and of the home. Both these [Pg 124] ought to be beautiful, but as few women are artistic enough to design anything, they follow the fashion. In this way they escape criticism from their companions who are like them. But the moment ugly dress or furniture is out of fashion its ugliness is apparent. I suppose most of us must be content to be tyrannized over more or less by fashion, or by fashion and poverty combined, till we develop greater genius in working out the problem of how to make our surroundings beautiful. I would simply suggest that we should resist fashions we know to be hideous, and try to follow those which commend themselves to our sense of beauty.

The two forms of beauty which are free to all of us are, I think, most neglected, and more neglected among those who are surest of their title as ladies than among those of more modest pretensions. These are poetry and nature. To read beautiful poems constantly and to learn them by heart, and to look out day by day on the glory of the world—these things give higher refinement than can be won by anything else merely intellectual. And such a love of beauty usually has deep springs in the moral nature.

Education has so much to do with refinement that we expect a lady to be educated as a matter of course, at least in some directions, mathematics and science being thus far not included. George Eliot says of Nancy in "Silas Marner," that she often used ungrammatical language, and was not highly educated, but that she was a thorough lady because she had delicate personal habits and high rectitude. [Pg 125]

This brings us to the deep foundations. A lady must be truthful. And the outward marks of truthfulness are sometimes recognized when their source is misunderstood. The lady wears real lace instead of a showy imitation. If she cannot afford what is real, she goes without. She is as careful about neat underclothing as neat dress. She does not pretend to accomplishments she has not. Indeed, the modesty essential to a lady is intimately connected with truthfulness. When she is wrong she does not think it beneath her dignity to own it. She never allows blame which belongs to her to fall on any one else. She makes no display. She wishes to be loved for herself and not because she belongs to the "best set," so she does not take pains to introduce the names of great acquaintances into her conversation. And of course she always tells the truth. She may observe all these things simply because it is good form, but a truthful woman will observe them without knowing they are good form, and she will be the real lady.

But one may have all the qualities we have enumerated and yet miss the charm we associate with the name "lady." A truthful person may not be kind. A woman may love beauty and still be hard. A perfectly pure woman may be unfeeling, perhaps all the more because she needs no charity herself. But a woman who does not show consideration for others cannot be an ideal lady. If she is considerate in a mechanical way, because she knows a lady must be so, it does not amount to much. And some women do all they can for others from a sense of duty. They study to make others happy in even trivial ways. They are good women, and on the whole—ladies. But the woman whose love for others is spontaneous, who sheds the radiance of kindness about her because she cannot help it—she is the lovely lady whose charm we all feel. Truth and love are the eternal foundations of the character of a real lady. [Pg 126]

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## IX

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### THE PROBLEM OF CHARITY.

I suppose every large-hearted girl wishes to do some work which will add to the happiness of others, and most girls would like to do a little, at least, outside of their own immediate circle. It seems to me that the most beautiful charity is always that which is done within one's own circle. There is the personal giving, the real denial of ourselves for others, the doing of the duties which come to us rather than of those we have fancifully chosen. And these duties are done for love.

Do you remember how Mrs. Pardiggle in "Bleak House" tried to interest Esther and Ada in some great schemes for doing good by wholesale, and how Esther modestly answered that they hardly felt equal to such great things, but that they hoped if they were careful to do all they could for those immediately about them their circle would gradually widen? This is the ideal way to do good. You help your neighbor simply without any pretense or self-consciousness. She helps her

neighbor, and so on. There need be no break in the chain from lowest to highest. Mrs. Whitney has taught beautiful lessons of this kind in her stories, emphasizing the theory of "nexts." I have often thought this was the only kind of charity which did not injure the giver; for the moment we try to help those perceptibly below us we are apt to be condescending and to feel a secret pride. Probably this inward satisfaction accounts for the readiness of many people to undertake forms of missionary work, though they are by no means thoughtful of those around them. There has often been bitter criticism of foreign missions to the heathen on this ground. Part of it is, no doubt, just. But as bitter criticism might be made of much noble work at home, like that of the Associated Charities, for instance.

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In Boston, it is said, there is not one woman of any standing in society who is not interested in some charity. Most of their work is probably genuine. It is done from a sincere wish to do the best thing—very likely in many cases simply to ease the importunate New England conscience, yet also, no doubt, with the hope of relieving suffering. But we can hardly hope that much of it is ideal since the true charity is "Not what we give but what we share."

The women who are readiest to give their money and even their time to the desperately poor do not like to share their pew in church with some quiet person whom they consider below them in the social scale. Some one tells of a woman who spent all her time in going about among the poor giving practical help, but who really cared so little about those she helped that every day on her return from her rounds she amused the family by satirizing her pensioners. She could not love them, perhaps, and it may still have been an excellent thing for her to help them. Nevertheless, this was not the ideal charity.

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There are a great many girls who would like to do some definite charitable work. They would like to be the founders of a great charity. They are ambitious, and their ambition is, on the whole, a noble one. Some of them are so sweet and generous to everybody about them that I really think they might be trusted to do something on a large scale. One of them might even oversee an orphan asylum; yet I do not think she could be such a blessing to little children as is a woman I know who is the matron of such an institution, for this woman had an unsympathetic step-mother, and she learned through a lonely childhood how to pity motherless children, and I heard a thoughtful woman say of her orphan asylum, "It was a shabby place, but beautiful to me because there was such a motherly atmosphere about it."

Others of these girls are too intolerant of everybody outside their own particular set to be allowed to do any work for the poor except to give money, and even then there is danger they may be so lifted up by a sense of their own goodness that perhaps it would be better for them personally to spend the money extravagantly, for then they would certainly be ashamed of themselves. Nevertheless, the poor need their money, so perhaps it is better they should give it.

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This brings me to another point. In the country it is still possible to keep to the ideal neighborly charity, but in the city there are quarters where the misery is wholesale, and wholesale scientific methods must be applied to relieve it. The Associated Charities in Boston, for instance, do a kind of work which must be done unless we are willing to sit down and let all the innocent suffer with the guilty. And many of the leaders have the ideal spirit, and they hold up ideal standards for the visitors of the poor, that is, they ask us to visit the poor with love in our hearts. The work to be done in cities is so enormous that every woman of leisure who feels the desire to help should certainly be encouraged to do so, and I am even inclined to think that where so well-organized a system exists as in the Associated Charities, it is a saving of energy for her to put herself under its direction though not so wholly as to allow her no means or leisure for her personal sphere of action to expand naturally.

As long as we try to do the nearest duties there will always be failure enough to keep us humble and to make it safe for us spiritually to undertake something beyond. A girl tries to help her brothers, and instead of admiring her for it they frankly tell her how far she falls short. But if she does a tithe as much for the poor she is likely to get some thanks, more or less sincere, and all her circle of friends admire her. This pleasant encouragement does her no harm as long as she has the antidote of the family criticism, so I would let every ardent woman have some outside work, and the Associated Charities will find room for every worker. Some women can help children by teaching them and amusing them, and this is the most efficient kind of work, for it prevents crime and misery. Some can sew for the poor, some can cook, some can manage tenement houses as Octavia Hill has done.

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To give what we call practical help we must be practical ourselves. I think if the busy housekeepers who do their own work have time to visit the poor, their suggestions are of infinitely more value than any given by rich ladies who are making a business of charity; but such women have little time, so the rich must humbly try to take their place.

I know a charming girl whose mother does not allow her to go into the kitchen. She found great difficulty at school in learning the weights and measures, and at last her teacher asked her if she had ever seen a quart measure, to which she replied doubtfully that she was not quite sure. A few years hence she is certain to be what is called a "friendly visitor." I have no question about her friendliness, and the poor will bless her sweet face, especially when she gives them money freely, as she can easily do, but I should not expect her to be able to give them very useful advice about spending money—which they need still more. It must not be supposed, however, that I scorn the kind of work she can do. There is something better to be done for the poor than to teach them economy—even a wise economy—it is to rouse their higher nature. I should think that no one could be an hour with this young girl without having some aspiration to be noble.

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A beautiful and graceful woman has a unique work to do for the poor. It is on the same principle that the Princess of Wales can give pleasure by simply distributing the flowers in a hospital with her own hands. It is possible for beauty to condescend without wounding. A woman who is not outwardly attractive must do a different kind of work. The first brings a poetic element into a dreary life, and may even in this way arouse the aspiration for an unattainable ideal. But a plain and awkward woman may be the inspiration of a still higher ideal by the radiance of her goodness.

When girls ask me, as they often do, *what* they shall do for others, I find it impossible to answer. Their talents and their opportunities must decide the particular form of work. But its real value will depend entirely on what they are. I can only say that there is so much work to be done that each must do all she can; that she must choose the thing she can do best and persevere with that quietly, not trying to do many kinds of work at once; that all she does must be done with love; and that above all things she must not forget that her own circle of family and friends shows plainly the centre from which God wishes her to begin to work.

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To the women who live in the country the circle widens naturally and beautifully. If a neighbor is ill, one sends in delicacies to the invalid, another offers to take care of the children, and a third acts as watcher. When a drunkard reduces his family to destitution, one neighbor sends a breakfast to them, another flannel for the baby, another finds work for the oldest girl, and another pays the boys a trifle for bringing wood and water. The cases of actual destitution are so few that they can all be met in this way unless the sufferers are too proud to let their wants be known; and even then there is sure to be some real friend who goes to see them naturally without any thought of being a friendly visitor, and thus comes to the rescue.

Charity in the country is the natural flower of a loving heart. If a woman has a beautiful home in the country, it stands for a refining influence for the whole village, for she usually opens it to those of her neighbors who can appreciate it, since in the country there are not too many people, and those of like tastes meet without regard to differences of fortune.

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A woman in the country who has even a collection of photographs of beautiful pictures can easily make them a real blessing to many who have no other avenue open to art. And so with books. One owns a copy of Plato, another of Dante, another of Goethe, and these books circulate freely among all who care to read them. They are better than a public library where the books must be hurried back at a given date. They are sometimes even better than large private libraries where the number of books is distracting.

I know a young lady who is the only highly educated musician in a little country village. She sings in the choir and makes the church service a new thing. She good-naturedly steps in and trains the children in their choruses for festival occasions. She has invited half a dozen young fellows to form a glee club and sing one evening a week in her parlor. They all have musical talent, and they are capable of appreciating her attractive manners, but they had not before thought of any better way of spending their evenings than in screaming about the streets. If a poor girl has a good voice, this young lady finds time to teach her to sing. I do not think it ever entered her mind that she was doing charitable work. The work was directly in her pathway. She could do it, and having a large, loving heart, she has done it. But there is no one in the village who has done so much to raise the tone of life there.

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So the improvement of a country town goes on exactly in proportion to the loving-kindness of the people and their willingness to share whatever material and mental treasures they may have. Perhaps the same is true in the city; but the number of treasures to be shared, as well as the number of people to share them, is so bewildering that it is next to impossible to bring form out of the chaos without employing scientific middlemen, and the fascination about helping others almost vanishes.

Nevertheless, let us cling to the doctrine that

"'T is love, 't is love, 't is love that makes the world go round,"

and even in the city we may all have hope.

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## X.

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### THE ESSENTIALS OF A HOME.

Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.

That is, it is the family which makes the home, and this is even truer of the mother and her daughters than of the father and his sons. Sometimes even one sunshiny spirit in a house transforms it, and where all the family are in harmony there cannot fail to be a home in the best sense.

But there are virtues and virtues. "I admire Miss Strong, indeed I love her," I heard a lady say not long ago, "but I can't imagine her making a beautiful home under any circumstances." Yet Miss

Strong is gentle, sweet-tempered, thoroughly unselfish and high-minded, quiet and unobtrusive, neat and well-bred. Then what is wanting in Miss Strong?

"I think it will be best for Jenny to teach," wrote another lady in regard to a young girl in whom she was deeply interested, and whose gifts and graces she had been cataloguing at great length. "At least, what else is there for a woman to do who is thoroughly feminine but not at all domestic?"

We think of unselfishness as the first need of a woman who is to be the presiding genius of a home; but both Miss Strong and Jenny are conspicuously unselfish. [Pg 137]

It seems that though a fine character, and particularly a loving one, must be the foundation of the home, yet certain special qualities are necessary. Among the thousands who have read "Robert Elsmere" does any one feel that Catherine, with all her earnestness and deep love of others, made her girlhood's home a pleasant place? She was ready to give up a home of her own, thinking her mother and sisters needed her, and yet her sister Rose, at least, was secretly longing to be free from the constant influence of such severe moral standards. In short, Catherine did not make her home comfortable.

Comfort, I think, enters into every idea of a home. We wish to be unrestrained there. That, however, is a different thing from being lawless. There must be moral restraints, even for the sake of the comfort itself. Otherwise, the freedom of one interferes with the freedom of another, and finally the reaction tells in the discomfort of all.

Physical comfort is necessary in a home. Some of the best women do not understand this. They are disgusted with the sarcasm that "The road to a man's heart is through his dinner." That would be disgusting if it were the whole truth. But we must all eat every day of our lives, and appetizing food prettily served adds much to the comfort of the day. Indeed, without it only a boor or a saint can be really comfortable. [Pg 138]

Women who are good cooks are sometimes ill-tempered and refuse to exercise their art. But discomfort in the matter of dinner usually comes from a different kind of housekeeper. There are some women who think it is a weakness to care about food. Their rule is, "Eat what is set before you, asking no questions," a sufficiently good rule for those who are dining, but a miserable one for the housekeeper to force upon others. There are still other women who have a definite opinion as to diet. They have studied food from a hygienic point of view, and they watch the effect of every mouthful. Such a study ought to be useful, but in point of fact it is a frequent source of discomfort. Nothing ever digests well when our mind is concentrated on our digestion. One difficulty may be this. The women who have turned their attention to this subject have often done so because they were invalids. They find certain food injurious to them and decide it is injurious to everybody. So a whole healthy household is restricted to the invalid's bill of fare. The housekeeper is so certain she is doing her duty, that she easily steels her heart against the murmurs of her family, and the discomfort continues. A thoroughly healthy woman, however, will provide all the better for her family if she understands the effect of different articles of diet.

To be comfortable, a house should be warm enough. Of course, I do not mean that we need to breathe the superheated atmosphere which foreigners criticise in most American houses. It is the mother of the family who must correct this. She can easily do so, because she has it entirely in her power to form the habits of her children in this particular, and it is rarely the case that a man likes an overheated room until he has been trained by his more sensitive wife to bear it. [Pg 139]

But I mean that nothing physical takes from the comfort of a home so much as chilliness. So long as we are warm enough we may relish a very frugal dinner, but a feast is unappetizing in a cold room. Indeed, I believe we may economize in anything better than in fuel. It gives a great sense of comfort in going into a house to find it warm all through. Many people, however, cannot afford such luxury. But if you can only have one fire in the house, see that that is always burning; and if it must be in the kitchen in the cooking-stove, keep the stove so bright that its black ugliness is a centre radiating cheerfulness. There are plenty of homes in which there is no need of stint, where through carelessness and neglect there are times when everybody in the house is shivering, while perhaps at other times half the rooms are at a red heat.

I remember one of Charles Reade's heroes who was wavering between the attractions of two women, and the novelist represents the simpler of the two as being careful that there should always be a blazing hearth when the lover came. This innocent device gave him a sense of comfort which almost won his heart. It seemed to me a touch of truth. [Pg 140]

We cannot all afford open wood fires, though their beauty and healthfulness make us wish we could; but most of us can keep the "clear fire" and the "clean hearth," which Mrs. Battle wisely considered the proper preliminaries to the "rigor of the game."

Though we want warm homes, we do not want close ones. Most houses are not very well ventilated, and if we keep our windows open in winter weather, we must expect our bill for fuel to be a large one. Some of us are too poor to disregard this fact, but most of us could probably afford to save enough in our dress to meet what I may call this necessary extravagance. I have seen a great many landladies who looked so severe on seeing a window open in a room where the register was also open, that the unhappy boarder felt at once like a culprit for even desiring both warmth and fresh air at the same time. Once, however, I had the good fortune to know a woman of different views. She bought a house expressly with the intention of letting it to transient lodgers. She found, as is common, that the furnace-heated air which passed through the registers



into the rooms came from the cellar. She immediately made alterations, so that the fresh outside air should be heated and carried over the house. "It costs more," she said, "but dear me! what is expense to fresh air?" Moreover she said so much to her lodgers about the necessity of fresh air, that all the windows in the house were always streaming open. "I once knew a lady who died of pneumonia from airing her room too much," said the landlady, "but that was a beautiful death!"

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I doubt whether there is comfort under a system of ventilation which induces pneumonia, but it certainly is luxury as well as comfort to let in all the fresh air we want and not to stint fuel.

Plenty of light is another essential in a home. Most city houses are deficient in sunlight, and most of them, however richly furnished, are accordingly depressing. Whether or not the dreams of socialists can ever be realized we do not know, but none is more alluring than that of the disappearance of blocks of houses. If every house could stand in the midst of its own garden, the gain would be as great in inner comfort as in outward beauty.

No one can tell the amount of near-sightedness caused by the effort to read and write in our dark city houses. Rich people ought to be extravagant in the matter of light. Corner lots are worth buying, and it is worth while to live on "streets with only one side."

And when natural light fails let us have enough of the artificial. Even the poor who cannot have electricity or gas hardly need economize here with kerosene at its present rates. A kerosene lamp, to be sure, is not often a beautiful or poetical object, but with the right kind of care the vile odor may be suppressed, and though this involves an additional burden for the housekeeper, light is too essential for the work to be grudged. A sufficient number of *clean* kerosene lamps will make a house cheerful from one end to the other. Now I have often noticed that women who are compelled to economize in little things are inclined to economize in all things. They will strain their eyes for fifteen minutes after it is too dark to sew, they will sit in a room dimly lighted by one lamp when two are necessary to make it attractive, without stopping to think that twelve or fifteen cents worth of oil would supply three large lamps for a week! And in this way they sacrifice not only cheerfulness, but opportunities for all the family to do easy and comfortable work.

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Cleanliness is as essential in a home as over-neatness is destructive to it. There is nothing homelike in any room that is in perfect order; but, on the other hand, there is little of the home feeling in a room that is not bright and fresh with cleanliness. Tables littered with books, chairs and sofas strewn with gloves and ribbons, and even a floor encumbered with a prostrate doll or two, are cheerful; a trail of leaves and mosses from a basket of woodland treasures is endurable dirt. But dust in the corners which shows the dirt to be chronic and not accidental, unwashed windows, dingy mirrors, etc., etc., have no redeeming quality. It is a good thing for the mother of the family to love order, but there is ample scope for that in keeping every closet and drawer and box and basket in a dainty condition. However neat a room may be, it is odious the moment an open drawer or closet reveals disorder. The meaning of this is that the disorder which comes from daily happy living is delightful, and that is what we see in the large confusion of a room when in use; but the disorder which comes from carelessness about finding a convenient place for everything, and from laziness about putting things in their places when we have done using them, is not beautiful.

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For the kind of neatness which makes a home homelike we must have room enough, but not too much room. This is rather a vague statement, I know, but the actual measurements of a house should vary with circumstances; for example, a large room with few people in it will always be stiff, even if it is splendid; while a small room filled with useless *bric-à-brac* will be uncomfortable even with a solitary occupant. On the subject of *bric-à-brac* I feel strongly, and I will speak of it more fully elsewhere.

But I do not include pictures in the term *bric-à-brac*. There ought to be pictures in every home for their intrinsic value. Fortunately they take up little room and are easily kept in order. Many of us do not agree about pictures. Most Americans who buy oil paintings advertise their want of cultivation in their choice, and even those who rigidly confine themselves to engravings and photographs of the old masters do not succeed much better. I remember a man, the son of a country minister, who knew pictures only from the literary side. He was a great reader, and had been familiar with the names of Raphael and Da Vinci and Dürer from childhood. He knew well what were their masterpieces, and when he went abroad he bought hundreds of photographs of these works. His house was full of pictures; there was not one among them which was not a copy of something really beautiful, and not one copy which had any beauty in itself. This man had not the sense of beauty, though he had the moral sense which led him always to wish for the best.

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But all any of us can do is to express the best we know. The essential quality in pictures in our own homes is that they should express the best we ourselves have reached. Still, many pictures of high artistic merit are wanting in the real home charm. I believe most of those which hang on our walls and are always before our eyes should be cheerful in character. I sympathize with the old abbess who chose to have her rooms frescoed with Correggio's happy cherubs, and who liked to have constantly before her, though in a convent, his goddess Diana, whose smile some one has said is full of "resolute sweetness."

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I remember once having to pass a bitter hour of waiting in the drawing-room of a physician well known for his high culture. Every picture in the room was a work of art, but every one was solemn and even severe. Dante, Savonarola, the tombs of the Medici, etc., etc., afforded no escape from sad thoughts. The only relief was in the sweet serenity of Emerson's face, and even

in this instance the most severe of all the portraits had been chosen. There was not one point of color in any of the pictures, but indeed most of us cannot afford paintings that are good for anything, so I could not quarrel with that.

For a daily companion I would rather have a Raphael than a Michael Angelo, and though for love I would slip in a Millet or two, I should not want a room full of Millets.

The heavy furniture of a home should be comfortable first of all. The chairs should not all be of the same size and height any more than the people. Arm-chairs are better than rocking-chairs, as they are less in the way. The furniture should not be light enough to be easily overturned, but the castors should always run easily. A lounge is a homelike piece of furniture, but let us hope it need not be much used.

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A word more to the young woman who is choosing furniture for half a life-time. Fancy you have it to dust! You may have an army of servants, but certain patterns of furniture can never be kept clean. I remember two friends who chose furniture at the same time. It was the era of black walnut and green rep, and they chose sets looking much alike. But in one case the walnut was elaborately carved,—by machinery, which made it all the rougher,—and there were many little grooves to invite the dust in the upholstery; while in the other case the wood was simply moulded and polished, and the cloth was so put on that one or two vigorous strokes of a brush would cleanse it. It is true that heavy wood carved by hand is beautiful enough to repay us for its care, but that being smoothly finished does not catch very much dust.

The evening should be the crown of the day in a home. There are few homes where the evenings are as homelike as they could easily be. This is partly because there are so many outside attractions both in the city and country. Now I am not of those who think it praiseworthy to be always at home. I was told the other day of a steady young man who had not been out an evening in three years. I felt no enthusiasm about him. I think outside interests are absolutely necessary for any fresh or large life. But I think when we find ourselves going out as many as half our evenings, we are really dissipated, unless the circumstances are of a very unusual character, for we need as many as three or four evenings in a week to develop true home life. But in stay-at-home families, though the evenings are pleasant, I think they are seldom ideal. The reason for this is that the days are so crowded. The father and mother are tired, and, moreover, the father has no other time to read his unnecessarily voluminous newspaper, and the mother has no other time to do her unnecessarily elaborate sewing, while the children generally have lessons to study. Even then, a cosy room, with plenty of fire and light, where all the family meet together and feel no restraint, is a cheerful though a silent place. And we cannot all escape overwork however valiantly we fight our battle with non-essentials. Those who work ten hours in a factory, for example, have very little space for the other essentials of life, and there must be crowding. But some of us could simplify the day and so find room for unmitigated enjoyment in the evening. Sometimes sewing is pleasant in itself when cheerful conversation or reading is going on about us. I suppose the mother's work-basket will usually form an attractive nucleus in any home picture, and if there is not too much or too anxious sewing, I believe most women like it. And a moderate newspaper need not monopolize a whole evening. There are occasionally times when a careless child should be made to study a lesson at night. But the ideal evening at home is social, and its occupations are such that all can join in them. For myself I believe very fully in reading aloud. But in any household happy enough to consist of father, mother, and children, any book read aloud ought to be one which has some interest for all. The father and mother may both be intensely interested in the philosophy of Hegel, but I should not like to think they would ask the children to be quiet that they might read it aloud to each other. Books of travel, biography, novels, and poetry, appeal to all but the very young members of the family who ought to be in bed betimes. Of course the children do not take in everything in such books, but that is not necessary. If they only understand enough for enjoyment, it is a healthful stimulus to meet with something they do not understand. Perhaps the father and mother will say regretfully that they have no other time for their special studies. In the end the light literature may do them as much good as solid work, but even if it does not, they can better lose something themselves in intellectual development while their brood of children is about them than to miss the full rounding of their home life. If they live long, they will have too many quiet hours by themselves. In many families, however, the youngsters are more ready for solid reading than the older people. It is often the elder sister who has to give up her German and science to read travels and stories to her parents as well as to the children.

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Drawing, fancy work, sewing, and whittling can all go on without disturbing the reading, or a tired mother can lie on the lounge and listen; but if any one must sit idle, reading may grow tedious, though good plays in which each can take his part are generally enjoyed. I was once in a home in Switzerland where the family spent most of the evenings in reading Racine, Molière, and Corneille.

No home is complete without music. Even a large piano which has seen its best days does not seem to be altogether a cumberer of the ground where another equally bulky piece of furniture would be unendurable. But unless some member of the family has decided musical ability, the best use of a piano or organ in a home is to sustain the uncertain voices in singing. Home singing is almost a necessity even where no one sings very well. I should not wish to encourage the unmusical to display their voices outside their own doors; but if half a dozen members of a family are able to "carry a tune," and one of them can play a simple accompaniment correctly, I think the singing of fine hymns and pleasant ballads at home will prove most delightful to them all, besides bearing good fruit morally and physically. A family happy enough to have a little higher endowment, and a little more cultivation, so that one plays a violin, one a flute, and so on, may have a little private orchestra which may give as much enjoyment, and, all things considered, may be as elevating, as the perfect work of great musicians. It seems to me that any father and mother who wish the home to be dear to their children can afford to spend money on music far better than on many things considered more essential—clothes for, example.

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But all the family circle ought be able to join in the evening occupations. If only one is a musician, but a small part of each evening can be given to music. On the other hand, I have no mercy for the young lady who has had time and money lavished on her musical education, who will not take the trouble to play to her brothers in the evening. If she distrusts her powers she need never play to other people who may ask her out of compliment; but when brothers ask their sisters to play, they mean that they want the music, and they should have it.

Chatting is pleasant in the evening, and does not interfere with a dozen other occupations. One can even read a newspaper or a novel while the rest are talking. Little twilight chats by the fire when the children confess their misdemeanors to their mother, or when the mother tells stories to the children, are full of the spirit of home, and there always ought to be some leisurely hours in every family when the father and mother and the grandfather and grandmother can relate old experiences to the younger generation. If the older people would only remember to tell these tales for the sake of the younger and not to gratify their own garrulity, so that they would dwell more on the events and customs and people of the past which ought to have a permanent interest, I believe such chat would always be of the highest value, and that the young would like it as well as the old; but when it is mere gossip about people long dead the young have a right to be restless. There is always danger that chat will degenerate into gossip, so it is not generally best to have too many evenings devoted entirely to conversation.

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The right kind of reading and music seem to me far better occupations for home evenings than games. There is too much hard work in chess and whist and too little sociability to make them in any way desirable. Euchre and backgammon seem invented to pass away time, which is so precious to most of us that we should like to feel we had something at the end of an hour by which our lives were richer than at the beginning. Yet games have their place. Young-people have their times of liking them. If they really enjoy them and play with thorough good temper, they get true recreation from them, and all innocent enjoyment has a moral effect as valuable as the intellectual effect of a good book. So a mother who wishes to make a true home for her children will not grudge whole evenings spent in games which would be unspeakably wearisome to her if played with people of her own age; indeed, the chances are she will thoroughly enjoy such evenings, and be as interested in capping verses or asking twenty questions as any of the youngsters, while if she is a worn and anxious mother, such simple pastime may be the best refreshment. I believe there is less to be said in favor of cards than of other games, but I often think of the words of a friend, "We are strict people," she said, "but when the boys were growing up and began to be wild for cards, we played regularly every evening till they were tired of it, and I think they did not care to play elsewhere."

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If a home is to be ideal, it must contain a father and mother and children. A lonely man or woman who is so unfortunate as not to have this ideal home should, I think, try to find as many of its elements as possible. A man should not live altogether at his club, and it is a pity for a woman to live permanently with women alone. And a home is so incomplete without children that it seems almost necessary that every childless man or woman should adopt one or two. Unfortunately this is often impossible, and then it becomes the more essential to seek for a boarding-place where we may get a little of the cheer of other people's children and at the same time practice some of the virtues which children always call out in older people. No home is truly homelike in which there is not a large hospitality. I have so much to say on this head that I must leave it for another chapter.

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I have said little about the qualities of character which make a happy home. Beyond a loving nature, on which all the others rest, I know of nothing more essential than a serene temper. Let a woman be "mistress of herself, though china fall." The daily temptations to irritation are incessant, and irritability will destroy the comfort of any home, even if it is well warmed and lighted and furnished with easy-chairs and sofas, even if everybody is high minded and ready to

take part in refined pleasures, and even if room is made in the family circle for a host of agreeable friends.

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## XI.

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### HOSPITALITY.

No home is genuine which is not also hospitable. Just as we must go out to get fresh life, we must welcome fresh life which comes in to us. And further than that it would be a poor nature which found no one to love outside the home circle. If we love any one we wish to share our life with our friend.

But it is impossible to be hospitable except by welcoming our visitors to our every-day life. If we depart much from our usual customs, our freedom is checked, and the visit becomes a burden, willingly borne, perhaps, for the time, but sure to be felt if often laid upon us.

A friend, well known in literary circles, inviting me to visit her in a Western city through which I was to pass on my way to another State wrote, "You must stay more than a day or two, for, if not, I shall have to give up my time to you, and I can't interrupt my daily work! I go into my library at nine o'clock every morning and stay till two. But in the afternoon I drive, and when in the evening my husband comes home from business and my children from school I give myself up to my family."

Upon this invitation I determined to stay a week. "You must not come into my library in the morning unless I invite you," said my friend laughing; "but there is another library adjoining your room where I shall not venture to disturb you without leave!"

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I remember a home which opened very hospitable doors to me when I was a young girl,—that of a widow with two young daughters. They were in straitened circumstances, and could not effectively heat the large and handsome house left by the father of the family. "I ask you to come in the winter, my dear," the lady used to say to me, "because you live in the country and can sleep comfortably in a cold room: I ask my city friends to come in the summer." That, I think, showed a true spirit of hospitality. She gave what she had to those who could enjoy it. I shall never forget the cosy afternoons I have passed in her warm sitting-room, while one read aloud and the rest did fancy work, or sometimes the plainest of sewing. We read novels, some first rate, some second, or even third rate, without a thought of getting any benefit from them. But we chatted and laughed and enjoyed ourselves. Or sometimes some of us would go into town to a *matinée*, and coming home tingling with cold would find a hot and savory supper awaiting us in the bright dining-room, prepared by those who had stayed at home, and who were eager to hear everything about the play which we were eager to tell. There was no servant to trouble us, and we all enjoyed ourselves together in washing the dishes. We sat up as long as we pleased and toasted our feet, and in zero weather even wrapped up a hot brick to take to our chilly beds.

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But this lady was not without ambition. She wished she could entertain more as other people did. She thought she ought to give some parties, especially as she liked to go to other people's entertainments. And so, on one occasion, she did give a party. It was a grand affair. The whole house was set in order and decorated. Caterers came from the city, and her tables were beautifully laid with exactly the same salads and cakes that she was in the habit of eating at other houses. Her cards of invitation were of the choicest style, and her house was filled with fashionable people, since, in spite of her reduced circumstances, she had a perfectly assured position in society, and there was also a respectable number of unfashionable people present, for she was too truly hospitable to leave out anybody she liked. She was a skillful manager, and succeeded in carrying through her undertaking for half the expense usual in such a case; but it cost her sleepless nights. Of course, "The labor we delight in physics pain," and I am sure she thoroughly enjoyed her grand party which everybody said was perfect in all its appointments. Nevertheless, her bills amounted to one sixth of the yearly income of the family, so that she never gave another party till later in life, when fortune suddenly smiled upon her again and put her in possession of a million. I do not condemn her party, but merely use it to point my statement that we cannot often exercise hospitality except as we admit our friends to our daily life.

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A friend of mine who was making a tour of the South bethought her of a cousin in New Orleans whom she had not seen since the war. She wrote to her, "I am going to New Orleans for a week or two and wish you might find me a boarding-place near you, so that I could see you as well as the sights." The Southern cousin at once replied with a cordial invitation that the Northern cousin should visit her. The Northerner had no idea of making a convenience of her almost unknown relative, and declined; but the Southerner insisted that the visit would be a real favor to herself. "That is," she added, "if you can be comfortable in the way we live." The Northerner could hardly refuse longer, but having certain fastidious ideas, she was rather startled on reaching New Orleans to find that her cousin's family, in which there were eight children, lived in a house of five rooms! She felt, in spite of her precautions, she must be an intruder. But the husband of her cousin said sweetly, "Where there is room in the heart, there is room in the house," and she stayed, and had one of the most delightful experiences of her life.

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I am afraid few Northerners judged by this standard can be said to have "room in the heart,"

though I remember gratefully a minister's family in Massachusetts who lived in a little house and with narrow means, and yet received with bright smiles all their friends from the towns around who chose to stay with them. A brother minister would drive over with his whole family and stay a few days, and no one ever suggested there was not room for everybody. All the young collegiate cousins took this home in their way on their vacation tramps, and brought with them as many of their classmates as chose to come, never thinking it necessary to give any warning of their approach. I have known as many as a dozen young cousins to be gathered in the house at one time, the boys from Yale and Amherst, girls from New York and Philadelphia, or from quiet country boarding-schools,—one indeed came all the way from London,—and they enjoyed themselves as much as the visitors in an English country-house. They did not "ride to the meet," of course, or attend a county ball; but they went blackberrying together, and they sang songs, and played duets, and had games of croquet, and read French, and acted Shakespeare under the apple-trees; they climbed a mountain, and rowed on the pond, and took long botanical expeditions. The minister's wife was herself a delectable cook, but she must have wrinkled her brow many a time in planning how to get enough bread and butter to go round even with the aid of the blackberries, and some of the young fellows had to sleep on the hay in the barn, though happily they had a natural bath-tub provided in a stream among the bushes behind the house.

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The achievement of this hostess is the more notable because she was a New England housekeeper, and her standard of neatness was high. If she had attempted anything but the simplest manner of entertainment she would certainly have had nervous prostration. But her simplicity of living saved her, and she is still hale and hearty, though she has passed the limit of threescore and ten.

A friend who has lived much at the South, in speaking of the beautiful hospitality for which Southerners are distinguished, says that it comes partly from their easy way of taking life. They do not think it necessary to put the house in order because guests are coming, but let the guests take them as they find them. More than that, they are less given to "pursuits" than Northerners, and so less easily disturbed.

Believing, however, in the value of "pursuits," I have been interested in observing the manner of hospitality in a family among my friends. The family consists of the father, mother, and three grown-up daughters. All the daughters are earning their own living, and the mother is much occupied in household cares. It is a highly intellectual family. All are readers and keep abreast of the literature of the day. Beyond that, one or another of them is always studying German, or French, or history, or mineralogy, or taking up some social reform. Two of them find time to write acceptably for magazines. It would seem as if they could not have much leisure to entertain friends, yet their great rambling house, which stands in the midst of a shady old-fashioned yard and garden just outside the city, is seldom without a guest or two, and there never was a place where a tired soul and body could find sweeter rest. A cup and plate at table and a bed to sleep in are provided for the visitor, and so far there is not much trouble. The family meet at the table,—when convenient,—and there is plenty of delightful chat. One or another is often at leisure for a walk or a row or some other pastime, but no one appears to feel it necessary to give up any of her ordinary occupations for the sake of the visitor. I consider myself rather a particular friend of three of the family, yet I have often passed a Sunday there without seeing more than one of the three. The others had something to do on their own account. One of them, tired with her week's work, likes to rest all day in her own room. Another is an ardent Episcopalian, and wishes to follow all the church services from early morning through the evening. As there are so many agreeable people in the family one is not often obliged to be alone, but when left alone the sense of home comfort is only increased. There are plenty of lounges and easy-chairs; the large, comfortable tables are strewn with all the latest magazines; the bookcases are full of readable books, and the young ladies all have their individual collections of Soule's photographs, which are well worth lounging over. The fires are always bright within, and the long windows opening everywhere on piazzas and balconies command extensive and beautiful views. The rooms are sweet with flowers in winter, and the gardens are fragrant in summer. One can lounge and read all day, or take a walk, or do a dozen other things. The cheerful, interesting conversation at table, and in the odds and ends of time through the day, would be sufficient stimulus to all but the most exacting guests; while, as a matter of fact, there are always a few hours in the evening when everybody seems to be at leisure, and these form the social centre of the day. For my part I would much rather be entertained in this way than to have my footsteps dogged all day by some well-meaning and self-sacrificing devotee who tries conscientiously to amuse me.

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One of the most hospitable homes I ever knew was made by two young ladies in Boston. One of them was a country girl of genius and refinement who came to the city to do literary work. Here she formed a friendship with another young lady who liked to pass most of the time in Boston for the sake of its advantages in music, art, and the theatre. Neither was rich, but together they had a very respectable income. They found a nice little flat of six convenient rooms in an accessible and pleasant but unfashionable street, and furnished it with exactly the things they wanted to use every day. The furnishings were thus simple, but they combined comfort and beauty, for both the young ladies had excellent taste. I am tempted to describe all their original and charming arrangements, only that would lead me too far. I will only speak of their hospitality which was perfect. They gave no parties nor even afternoon teas. How could they without a servant? Indeed, though they had the luxury of getting their own breakfast in their sitting-room at any hour of the day when they liked to eat it, they were too much in the habit of eating their dinner at any restaurant near which they might happen to be when they were hungry to have inaugurated any extensive housekeeping. Moreover, they could see their city friends whenever they chose for an

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hour or two at a time without the trouble of providing a feast or a band of music. They always had bread and butter and fruit and various appetizing knickknacks stored away, so that if a caller stayed till all one was hungry a sufficient lunch could be served on the spot.

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But they exercised their hospitality chiefly for the benefit of their country friends whom they could not otherwise see. Many a nice old lady or bright young girl passed a week with them, who would otherwise have hurried through her season's shopping in a day and have had no time left for music or pictures. Most of these friends could amuse themselves very well through the day. If they did not know the way about, one of the hostesses conducted them to the libraries or museums as she went her own way to her daily occupation. There was always bread and cheese for them to eat if they chose, and if they cared for something more they could find it at a restaurant as their entertainers did, or they could cook it for themselves in the hospitable little kitchen. A folding bed could always be let down for them at night, and in times of stress another bed could be made on the sofa.

The hostesses spent little money or thought or time on their guests, except so far as they really wanted to do so, and yet they entertained great numbers of people most satisfactorily. They did not ask anybody to visit them from a sense of duty, but they always asked everybody they fancied they should like to see without a thought as to convenience, because it always was convenient to have anybody they liked with them. We know that men enjoy giving invitations in this free way, but they seldom have the power—for two reasons; either their wives are not satisfied to entertain the friends of their husbands in simple every-day fashion, or the husbands themselves are not satisfied to have them so entertained.

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Every one knows the great difference between city and country hospitality. Very few people in the city appear to be really pleased to see an uninvited guest, and they are far less likely to invite guests, except perhaps when giving a party, than those of the same means in the country. They are not altogether to blame in this. There are so many more people to see in the city than in the country that every one becomes a new burden, and the friendship must be very close indeed that survives such a strain. But I fear it is also true that in the city the non-essentials of life have undue weight.

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## XII.

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### BRIC-À-BRAC.

Our lives are clogged with *bric-à-brac*. Every separate article in a room may be pretty in itself, and yet the room may be hideous through overcrowding with objects which have no meaning.

The disease of *bric-à-brac* I think, is due to two influences,—the desire of uncreative minds to create beauty, and the mania for giving Christmas presents. Both these influences have a noble source, and will probably reach more beautiful results at last. Any mind awake to beauty must try to create it, and if its power and originality are not very great, what can it do better than to apply itself to humble, every-day trifles and try to decorate them? This is certainly right, if the old principle of architecture is always remembered: "Decorate construction, do not construct decoration." A few illustrations of my meaning may be needed.

I am obliged to use blotting-paper when I write. I have always been grateful to a friend who sent me a beautiful blue blotting book, with a bunch of white clover charmingly painted on the first page. It gives me pleasure every time I write a letter. I am glad that one of my friends was artistic enough to embroider some fine handkerchiefs for me with a beautiful initial. One of my dearest possessions is the lining for a bureau drawer made of pale blue silk, with scented wadding tied in with knots of narrow white ribbon. This lies in the bottom of the drawer, and owing to the kindness of my friends shown at various times, I am able to lay upon the top of each pile of underclothing either a handkerchief case or a scent bag of blue silk or satin. Some of these trifles are corded with heavy silk, some are embroidered with rosebuds, some are ornamented with bows of ribbon, and altogether they make the drawer a "thing of beauty" which to me personally "is a joy forever," and they are never in anybody's way.

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My friend has been less fortunate in the tributes of affection she has received. She has several elaborate and even pretty ties which she is obliged to append to her sofas and easy-chairs. They are believed to add to the harmony of coloring in her sitting-room, but they are very likely to be askew when the sofas and easy-chairs are in use; and as they always have to be rearranged during the process of dusting, they form an argument for delaying that duty as long as possible. She also has several head-rests and foot-rests, in which the embroidery is exquisite in itself, but which are so ill-contrived that they afford no rest to either head or foot. "They are worth having, though," she says, "because of their beauty, just as a picture is worth having though you cannot use it." "Yes," replies her husband, "they are worth having, but not worth having in the way. I do not want even the Sistine Madonna propped up in my easy-chair." Most of her friends are learning to paint, and many of them have chosen to give her at Christmas specimens of their progress mounted on pasteboard easels. These cover the tables and mantels and brackets of her sitting-room. "Ah!" she says softly, under her breath, "if they had only thought to paint book-marks instead One can never have enough book-marks. It would be delightful to have one in every book in the library, and the more beautiful the better, while the ugly ones, which perhaps

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come from our dearest friends, would be blessed for their usefulness besides being unobtrusive."

Sweet temper is certainly essential to a happy home; but if my friend were not too sweet tempered to hide these offerings from constant sight, her sitting-room would not be so exasperating a place. There is no room for a work-basket or a book on the tables. One is continually upsetting some frail structure, or tumbling over some well-meant æsthetic convenience.

Christmas presents are worse than any others. Even a hideous and useless gift offered at any other season may be acceptable, and we need not grudge it room, because being spontaneous, it represents love. But even the most genuine Christmas presents are becoming subject to the suspicion that they are given from a sense of duty, because gifts at that season have become a habit. I have no reason to suppose that any of my numerous kind friends grudge the Christmas presents they so generously give me; but I often find myself wondering how many of them would think of giving me anything as often as once a year if there were no special date to recall the custom to their minds.

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Gifts would be far more likely to be spontaneous if they were never given regularly; if, for instance, we avoided giving anything next Christmas to anybody whom we had remembered this year—excepting always to little children, to servants, and to the poor—the three classes to whom we never venture to give *bric-à-brac*, knowing well they would laugh us to scorn instead of flattering us by calling our contributions "perfectly lovely." Now, when a gift is spontaneous, its value is quite irrespective of its use, but at the same time it is far more likely to be both beautiful and useful. We read a book that moves us. How we wish we could share it with one friend who particularly enjoys such a book! We send it to her, and it is exactly the thing she wants. On the other hand, Christmas is approaching. What shall we give our friend? She likes books. Well, then, here is a prettily bound volume which is well spoken of. We have no time to look farther, and we send it to her. She thanks us in a pretty note, but is too busy in writing a hundred notes of thanks to read the book then. It is laid by and perhaps forgotten.

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We are making another friend an informal visit. We see that her needle-book is getting shabby. We hasten to get bits of kid and silk and flannel, and make her a new one with our daintiest stitches, and she is delighted. She uses it every day, and likes to remember that we thought of her comfort. But what shall we give her for Christmas? We think she has everything. We have too many friends to remember now, for time for such a dainty piece of sewing. Let us buy her some kind of an ornament. It is true that the French clock and the vases and the match receivers and two or three pictures on easels already crowd the mantel-piece, but there is an odd little bronze image which would not be amiss among them. It costs rather more than we can afford to pay, but we love her, and wish to give her something, and are at our wits' end to know what. She receives it graciously, and every time she dusts her ornaments she remembers us affectionately. "I don't grudge dusting this," she says sweetly to herself, "for my dear friend gave it to me, and I would do a great deal more than this for her." Of course, in a family where a servant dusts, the present is forgotten the moment it is placed on the shelf.

I remember the dearest of little girls who once made me a Christmas present of a purse of her own embroidering. The colors she chose were brilliant, but hardly beautiful; the material rather flimsy, the sewing was far beyond criticism, and if I had ever been rash enough to intrust any money to such a purse, I should have returned home penniless. But I was enchanted with the gift. I shall keep it as long as I live wrapped in the crumpled tissue paper in which this darling child folded it in her wish to make it look as attractive as possible. I can never even think of this gift without fancying the tiny unskillful fingers as they toilsomely labored over those silks that would catch and twist, and I think of the sweet brow and eyes which bent over the work, and am as sure as if I had seen it of the loving smile which hovered about the childish lips at the thought that she was going to give me a pleasant surprise.

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But as this little maiden grew up the cares of Christmas multiplied. There came a time when she had money to spend, and a host of friends to spend it upon, and when she certainly had not time personally to conduct the making of the number of Christmas presents she thought necessary to bestow. She was much too loyal to leave me out on this occasion, and if I were to judge of the degree of her affection by the proportion of her money which she spent upon me, she must have regarded me still as one of her dearest friends. She gave me a pair of exquisite cut glass vases, which, when placed in the sunshine, were certainly most beautiful with the flashing of colors. Their outline too was a lovely curve, but unfortunately such that it was impossible to put any flowers in the vases. At the base they were too slender to receive even one rose-stalk, while they were so broad at the top that it would have required a whole nosegay to fill them. If I had had a vast empty drawing-room which was to be filled with *bric-à-brac*, I could have found a place for them; but they were too delicate for my tiny parlor where there is so little elbow-room that slight things are in danger of being overturned. Of course I prize the vases and love the giver, but I know she never would have given them to me but for the feeling that the time had come to make a present; and so, while I shall cherish the little purse as long as I live, I have resolved that if the vases are ever broken, I will not treasure the fragments.

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From these two roots, the love of creating beauty and the desire to express love for our friends on the same day of every year, such luxuriant vines have grown that unless we prune them carefully we are in danger of being completely entangled by them. There are still, perhaps, some waste places which our useless *bric-à-brac* might make beautiful, and if we know any bare homes, let us by all means do something to brighten them; but let us not make for ourselves or

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give to our friends any small article which does not express use as well as beauty. We need not be at a loss if we remember Oscar Wilde's declaration that every article used in a house should be something which had given pleasure to the maker, that is, that it should be artistic. When all useful *bric-à-brac* has become beautiful, we shall no longer desire to make or possess beautiful *bric-à-brac* which is not useful. Of course I know that "Beauty is its own excuse for being," and I see in a fine picture, for instance, an appeal to the higher faculties which is more useful than usefulness. This I do not see in *bric-à-brac*, certainly not if the objects are to be so crowded in a small room that no one can see anything more than prettiness in them. Instead of my beautiful vases with their shifting lights, which do, after all, give me real pleasure sometimes when I am not too anxious lest I should break them, cut glass tumblers would have given me the same æsthetic enjoyment renewed at every meal. I might break a tumbler to be sure, but I should have the full enjoyment of it while it lasted.

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### XIII.

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#### EMOTIONAL WOMEN.

A highly emotional young lady was once defending the reasoning powers of her sex at the dinner-table of a cultivated and fair-minded physician who finally took occasion to say sweetly to her: "No doubt the reason of women equals that of men; but I believe the trouble is that all men like a woman a little better if she is governed by feeling rather than by reason."

"Oh," said the young lady in a glow, "that is like saying that you would a little rather a woman would not be truthful!"

"I hope not," said the physician.

The friend who told me the anecdote added that of the two young ladies who were at the time members of the physician's family, there was no question that he greatly preferred the one who was most reasonable and least emotional!

Some one else tells me of a clever young lady who applied for a position as dramatic critic upon a newspaper. The editor recognized her ability and her knowledge of the drama, but he said he was afraid to employ a woman in such a department, lest her feelings should prevent her telling the exact truth. She would be biased herself, and praise the things she liked, and then she would have her personal favorites among the actors. The young lady who believed herself capable of justice was greatly hurt.

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Are women really excessively emotional? And if so, is it well that they should be?

I suppose most people would agree that women are more emotional than men, and that this peculiarity comes in a great measure from their delicate physical organization, and in a great measure from the encouragement they get from men in indulging their feelings. Nobody admires a woman when her emotions reach the point of hysteria, and, in fact, those who have encouraged her up to that point are often least patient with her when the crisis comes. The general belief about hysteria is that it is caused by the culpable weakness of a selfish nature, and that is often true. But there are important exceptional cases becoming more and more numerous, where the parents have cultivated what they and their friends consider fine feelings so assiduously that the poor child is born helplessly weak and nervous, and a prey to every vibration in the spiritual atmosphere about her.

Now what are *fine* feelings? Jealousy, envy, hatred, and others of that class are not fine, and yet they are extremely common among those women who are sensitive and highly organized. They do belong more frequently than we sometimes think to the outfit of an emotional woman. A woman who would not hurt a fly has violent antipathies to excellent people. She would not hurt them either. She would delight in giving them food and clothing if they were in want. She wishes she need not hurt their feelings, but she usually does give pain, because her own feelings are paramount. The important point however is that she is unjust in her judgments. She exaggerates the faults of her foes, as well as the virtues of her friends, and widens every breach.

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But we all know that jealousy and envy and hatred are wrong, even if we endeavor to dignify them with finer names, and all of us who have any moral purpose do make our stand against them.

When, therefore, we speak in praise of a woman's emotional nature, we are thinking of a nature in which generosity swallows up justice, and duty is forgotten, because "love is an unerring law." We cannot be too generous, or too loving, or too sensitive to beauty and honor.

But men are as generous and loving as women, so, after all, we do have something a little different from this in our minds when we speak of the emotional nature of women. Do we not mean that a woman is unreasonable?

Love can never be too great, but it is often unwise. All affectionate women who have reached middle age must have received many confidences from girls who have been mistaken in supposing themselves loved by men who have grown tired of them. A girl often suffers intensely

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in such a case, and it is hard to know how much is due to wounded love, and how much to wounded pride. I suppose most of us have been astonished to see how often when a girl's life seems both to herself and her friends to have been utterly wrecked she is capable of responding to a new lover, and if he proves to be a fine man, how full and fine her own life becomes. This is right, and most natural to the most emotional natures, that is, to those which answer most readily to outside influences. Yet we all have a feeling that sudden and frequent changes of this kind show a shallow character, and girls sometimes make a pathetic struggle to resist new possibilities of happiness, because they cannot bear to admit that the old love can die.

The weakness of character in this case comes from the being ready to love any one who will make us the central figure without regard to any more solid foundation. Such love comes from vanity and is good for nothing. A girl cannot be too careful to guard against such an emotion.

And then, why should a woman cease to love a man simply because she is disappointed to find that he does not love her? Many times the fault is her own. She has believed he loved her because she wished to believe so. But if she has loved him because he was worth being loved, she has a right to cherish that love even when she knows it is hopeless, provided she does not hurt other people. I think it is happily not often that an altogether hopeless love continues long in full vigor, but occasionally it does. If the old lover marries, the woman who cannot conquer her love certainly ought to separate herself as far from him as possible. Any fine theory of being able to be a silent providence in his life is sure to prove fallacious, and to bring suffering to somebody. And it is not best for her to say much to her own friends of her sorrow. She either pains them or tires them. Any love which causes her to do this is unreasonable. I suspect that some women find their love slipping away from them and try to hold it fast by the expedient of talking about it. No love that has to be held in that way is worth keeping. There are loves we should cherish just as there are others which we ought to cast out, but nothing is real which cannot be retained except by making ourselves a burden to other people.

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Another unreasonable love is that which a woman feels for a man who has really treated her dishonorably. It is true that we do not love simply for merit. There are sympathies between men and women as between parents and children with which merit has little to do. One great reason that emotional women attract men is because they can make a hero out of such unheroic stuff. And why should we try always to see the exact reality as if that were nearer the truth than the same reality transfigured by ideal light? The more we believe in others, the better and happier we all are. A man full of faults, selfish, and even vicious, may be helped by a woman who trusts him. But when he has forsaken her, it is not often that she can be of much real service to him. She must indeed forgive him, but when she has genuinely forgiven him, the glamour of love will usually have disappeared. If she insists upon shutting herself up from other love for his sake, she should question herself as to the part sentimentality and perversity bear in her character.

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Most of the best work done in the world is done in the face of what seem to be insurmountable difficulties. Our faith moves mountains. An impossible duty is done. The fact that women ignore the impossibility is their strongest power. This, I suppose, is what the physician meant when he said that men liked a woman a little better if she was not always governed by reason. "Love believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." We all like to have such love as that lavished upon us. It is a noble love which glorifies the object by keeping in view all the time the ideal which is to be some day realized. It is something very different from the weak love which distorts the object simply because of its personal connection with us. But no doubt women who are weakly emotional in this way do have a great attraction for men, that is, so long as the man himself is an object of their emotions. Such women are pretty sure to have lovers when better and more unselfish women are overlooked. They do not wear very well, and men tire of them, especially when they exercise their emotions in new fields; and as wives (after marriage) and sisters and mothers they prefer the quieter and less impassioned women. But the great and ardent loves which influence a life still belong to the women of ardent feelings.

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Ardent feelings well controlled,—that is our ideal; but how few women of strong feelings do control them well, and how few who have perfect self-control have very strong feelings!

Which shall we choose, the strong feelings or the self-control? We have not complete choice in the matter, for we must begin with the temperament we are born with. Others may choose to love or hate us for the temperament we are not responsible for, but what can we do for ourselves?

I believe the hardest task is that of the cool-blooded women. How are they to make themselves feel without becoming hypocrites? Pretending to feel any emotion is no help in feeling it. Nevertheless, we are not entirely helpless. There are ways of nourishing noble germs of feeling even when the natural soil is cold and dry.

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One way is to clear the ground of weeds. A cool nature is sometimes peculiarly prone to envy and suspicion. A woman with little love of her fellow-creatures sits alone in her home day after day, and thinks of her own troubles and the shortcomings of her neighbors till it seems impossible to love anybody but herself. Such emotions as stir the dull current of her life are all selfish. But if she has the one saving virtue of being able to perceive her narrowness, the remedy is in her own hands. For she can go out and speak to somebody, and even a passing greeting sometimes sets the blood flowing afresh. And there is always somebody she can help, though, it may be only a child who is in some trifling difficulty. Every act of this kind makes another easier, and every such act nourishes the little germ of love in the heart. I have no doubt that persistence in doing small kindnesses for every one about her would be potent enough to transform the coldest of us into a woman glowing with love. Yet I cannot say I have ever seen such a transformation. I

suppose that is because the cold nature does not perceive its coldness or desire to change. Still there are surely some of us who know that love in us is only a stunted plant, and who do sincerely desire its more luxuriant growth. Those of us who have ardent feelings towards our friends know that we are often worse than cold towards those we do not fancy. We sometimes, alas, take a certain pride in our sensitiveness in this particular. We justify our hatred for uncongenial people till we have fairly faced the truth that love is the law of our being, and that we *must* love our neighbor. Then, though we cannot change our temperament, yet by the doing of prosaic duties, the germ of love may be made to bud and blossom. At least do not let us allow the turmoil of every-day affairs to crowd out love. We have not time to see our friend. A letter written to us with love and care is hastily skimmed and thrown aside. We do not answer it for many weeks, and then our haste is our apology for saying nothing we really care for. And by and by the love grows faint. Perhaps our friend dies, and the package of affectionate letters we once saved as precious lies forgotten in a drawer. Our friend did not fail us, we should love her just as dearly again if we were with her daily, but the love has been crowded out.

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Now, some of us are really overtaken with necessary work; but usually our hurry comes from our ambition or our indolence. If love were really first with us, we should find time for our friends.

But some of us are so placed that we are continually meeting new people whom we can warmly love. Now there is a limit to the number of people who can form a part of our daily life. It is possible to love a hundred people dearly, but it is not possible to talk intimately with a hundred people every day, or to write a hundred affectionate letters every week. But because we cannot cling closely to so many, let us not believe that we cannot cling closely to a few. Let us at least hold fast to a few friends, and without trying to form a part of the lives of the rest meet them all warmly when we do meet. We cannot love too much or too many people, and loving one helps us to love another, but we can only fully give ourselves to a few.

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I seem to be speaking altogether of nourishing emotion, and we ought to nourish noble emotions. But the task set especially to women is to control less noble emotions. We know well enough what is our duty in regard to jealousy, envy, and so forth, though so many of us who mean to be good women do not make a very heroic struggle even here, and perhaps justify our weakness by the plea that our feelings are strong.

I will therefore speak particularly of some of our failings which lean to virtue's side. What is it, for instance, to be a sensitive woman? The highest women are exquisitely sensitive, they respond to beauty, to love, to truth, and goodness instantly. But suppose they also tremble at ugliness, and shrink from pain? The two kinds of sensitiveness do often exist together. The perfect woman would follow the example of Christ and look through outward ugliness and suffering to inward beauty and goodness, and would keep herself unspotted from the world not by shrinking from it, but by helping it upward.

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But as we are imperfect, our sensitiveness shows itself most frequently in making us feel every jar to our pride and vanity. And we make a virtue of this. We ought to guard ourselves against such sensitiveness. It is a fault which lies very deep. It is almost impossible for a *very* sensitive woman to be just. In fancying wrong to herself she imputes wrong to everybody about her. In trying to shield herself she wounds others. She fears a slight was intended, and rather than submit to it, deliberately hurts some one who she knows may be innocent. Would it not be better to believe that the person who has hurt her is innocent, and submit to the slight even if it was intended? What harm can it do her to think a guilty person innocent? And what harm can a slight do her? But it always does harm to stoop to an ignoble feeling.

Let us at least be just. But the special accusation against women is that they are not just, and sometimes their special virtue is believed to be a romantic generosity which shuts out justice. Women are prone to be so generous to one person as to be unjust to another. They are strong partisans, and are determined to believe those they love always in the right. That seems like an amiable failing; but is it? Do we wish even our enemy to be wronged to save our friend? I think every high-minded woman would choose to be just, even if she must make her friend suffer; but it is very hard to live by that standard.

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Most men who write novels describe women as ready to forgive the man who has forsaken them for another woman, but as implacable towards the rival however innocent she may be. There is too much truth in such a picture, but the best women know that good women are not so unjust. That Dorothea in her anguish at finding Will Ladislaw singing with Rosamund Lydgate should do her utmost to help Rosamund take a better stand is of course unusual, but it is not unnatural. That was a splendid kind of generosity which did indeed swallow up justice, but it was founded on justice, the justice which strove to restore all things to their true relations. If any girl is puzzled as to the true province of feeling, and wishes to know how to reconcile warm-heartedness and self-control, let her read the wonderful chapter in "Middlemarch" which describes the interview between Dorothea and Rosamund.

Wherever we have to choose between justice and generosity we must be just. Otherwise, our generosity is mere sentimentality. And it does no good even to the person on whom we lavish it. Perhaps justice in its highest sense includes generosity. It is just that the rich should help the

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poor, and more truly generous to give with that thought than with the feeling that one has done something meritorious in giving. It is also mere justice that in dealing with our fellow-creatures we should always think of them as they may be, as they ought to be, and not to remember simply what they are. Our faith in them helps them to rise, but not our pretense that they are right when they are wrong.

After all, however, who is perfectly balanced? There are worthy women who have all their feelings well in hand, who are pleasant to live with, and who do an immense amount of good in the world, and yet who never rise above common-placeness, and never lift anybody else much above the material plane. And there are other women so ardent and generous and loving that they seem to lend wings to everybody they meet, who are yet crushed and ruined themselves by the excess of their grief not only for their own sorrows, but for those of the whole world, until by and by they drag their dearest and most sympathetic friends down into the same abyss of woe.

How shall we keep the true balance? I believe that it always is kept by religious faith, though that too is frequently distorted. The one thing necessary to believe is that a good God rules the universe. There is no limit to the love we may give to such a being or to the creatures He has made, and there is no sorrow which cannot be comforted by the thought that love underlies it, and that it has a meaning though we cannot see it, and there is nothing else which is so sure a spur to duty.

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Even this simple creed, however, is not possible to all of us. The upheavals in religious beliefs which this century has seen reach even emotional women and unthinking girls. We cannot believe a thing simply because we should like to believe it. Without this one article of faith, I believe happiness to be impossible, but we need not fail in our duty. A noble woman whose beautiful life is a benediction to all about her, but whose suffering has been intense, says that as her life has been an exceptionally favored one, it is impossible for her to believe in God. But she adds, "Though things are not for the best, we must make the best of them. We can always lighten somebody's burden." I believe she is wrong in saying things are not for the best, but there could be no more sublime resolution than to determine to do all we can to make wrong right.

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## XIV.

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### A QUESTION OF SOCIETY.

I cannot say how it is in other places, but every one who knows much of society girls in Boston must have been struck with a certain earnest note which sounds through all their frivolity. Few of them are satisfied to be simply society girls. They wish to identify themselves with some charity, or to make a thorough study of some art or science. It may be due to their Puritan ancestry, forbidding them to make pleasure the only business of life.

Many of them seem to be always on the eve of revolt and ready to give up society altogether. They join a Protestant sisterhood or even become Roman Catholics, or they enter a training-school for nurses. I heard only the other day of one of the loveliest "buds" of this season who has already decided that a society life is an unsatisfactory one, and who is almost prepared to go as a missionary to India.

A young girl told me not long ago that she was wretched at the thought she must soon leave school, for she dreaded the society life from which there seemed no escape. She wished to find some charitable work instantly which would be on the face of it so absorbing that it would be a complete excuse for her to refuse all invitations. She is only one among many who have the same feeling.

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It is hard to know what to say to such a girl. Motives are so mixed that it is hard to stimulate the growth of the wheat without stimulating that of the tares also. Most serious women would regret to see any young friend become a mere society girl, but how far it is best for a girl to give up society it is not easy to say.

Circumstances make different duties. The pathway of some girls lies directly through society. At the suitable age their sisters, their mothers, and even their grandmothers have formally "come out," and have at once been overwhelmed with invitations to the best houses in the city. If such a girl has it in her mind to rebel against precedents she would do well to consider carefully what Holmes has said in another connection: "There are those who step out of the ordinary ranks by reason of strength; there are others who fall out by reason of weakness." For instance, a girl is painfully conscious of her plainness. Her sister was a beauty and made a sensation when she was introduced. The plain girl dreads the comparisons which will be made, and shrinks from the social failure which she foresees. Her feeling would justify her in making no attempt to get into society if she were outside the charmed circle, but it would probably be a weakness to yield to it since she is already within. Her objection is not to society but to the place she is likely to fill in it. Probably the finest discipline of her life will be in accepting her place. If she can forget herself, or, at least, remember that it makes no real difference what others think of her, she will soon gain the quiet ease which is sometimes even more winning than beauty. This will be an attribute of character, and every person's influence is needed in society who commands interest by essential rather than non-essential qualities. Then, if she is a wall-flower she is sure to have time

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to relieve the misery of some other wall-flower, and as there are always a good many uninteresting people at any party she will find her mission increasing upon her hands. When she has thoroughly conquered her dread of society she will have a right to reconsider the question and decide whether she can use her time to better advantage. If she retires before fighting her battle she will probably always look upon her beautiful sister's love of balls with self-righteous pity; but long before she gains her victory she will be likely to acknowledge that if she were pretty she would love balls too.

It is not lovely for any girl to assume that she is better than her parents. Many girls are better than their parents, and sometimes so much better that they would be blind indeed if they did not see it; but they ought to be very slow to act upon such a truth.

As a general thing they are not nearly so superior as they suppose they are. They think "Irreverence for the dreams of youth" always comes from "the hardening of the heart." But youth has some fantastic as well as some noble dreams, so that docility is a better quality than independence in a very young person. If a worldly minded mother inculcates worldliness in her daughter, the daughter certainly ought to stand firm against the teaching; but if the daughter merely thinks she would rather read Browning than go to a party which her mother wishes her to attend, I think it is best for her to go to the party, even if she is conscious that her mother's motive is a worldly one. I speak only of young daughters. If a girl follows her mother's wishes about society till she is twenty-four or five, and still retains her first aversion to it, it seems to me she has earned the right to be the judge of her own actions, and if she had been really docile and sweet-tempered all the way through, I believe the most worldly minded mother would be ready to yield. It is only when the daughter has combated her parents all the time that they believe her to be unreasonable and obstinate and deserving of coercion. The point is, that she must make her stand for a principle and not for a whim.

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One reason that some girls fear society is that they feel awkward and have nothing to say. This is often the case with intellectual girls. They will not descend to the silly conversation which is more pleasing than it ought to be from the pretty girls of their set, and they know it would be out of place to talk of anything which really interests them. They do not want to be called blue-stockings even by young men they despise. But the agonies such girls suffer in society are unnecessary. There is no reason why any girl should talk very much. Of course if she is not a beauty or a graceful dancer she has no other way of attracting attention, but it is not necessary to attract attention. If she is quiet and unobtrusive and sweet-tempered she need not suffer from mortification even if she does not find much to enjoy. I remember a young girl whose great shyness made it a terror to her to meet any strangers. Besides this, she felt so little interest in commonplace people that she had no sufficient motive to subdue her fear. At last as she was on the point of refusing to go to a very small and informal tea party a friend not much older than herself talked seriously to her, explaining that her course would seem morbid and selfish to others, and might be so in truth. The young girl respected her friend, and making a heroic effort to control herself determined to accept the invitation. "I am going," she said to herself, "to show Ellen that I am not too obstinate to take her advice, and I don't care how I appear." So she sat still in a corner and listened to the conversation, which was indeed preternaturally stupid. She felt perfectly at her ease and was quite unconcerned about "making conversation." If anybody asked her a question she answered simply without cudgeling her brains for any wise or witty reply. By and by something was said which did attract her notice, and she actually made a spontaneous remark herself. She realized then that the worst was over. She never again felt such terror on entering a room, and though I never heard that she shone in society, she was always able after that to carry on her share of a conversation without anxiety. She simply laid herself aside for the time being and paid attention to what was going on.

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But while it is usually best for a young girl to go into society which lies naturally in her way, it is a very different thing to push into society which lies outside of her path. It is necessary to speak strongly on this point. In every city the number of inhabitants who have lived in it since its foundation is, of course, very small, and they always form an aristocracy, jealous of interlopers. They generally are a law-abiding, conservative class, with some sterling qualities. They are superior to a great many people who would like to associate with them, but inferior to a great many others. Now, just at the circumference of this circle there is another circle equally good, intelligent, and refined, who see no reason why they should be shut out from the inner circle. There is no reason except that they did not first occupy the central ground. The aristocracy of the city is formed on the principle of "first come, first served," and the first will never relinquish their places to the new-comers. Why should the new-comers care? There are enough among them to make a society as good, intelligent, and refined as that from which they are shut out. Nevertheless, it is a human failing to prize what we cannot have, and some of the later comers look wistfully across the dividing line. They cannot cross it, but sometimes their daughters can. They send their daughters to the same schools with the daughters of the "four hundred," and the girls make friends with each other, and with a little skill the password may be learned and the young plebeian may find herself indistinguishable from a patrician. There are fathers and mothers who urge their daughters to make haste to occupy every coigne of vantage, and gradually advance into the heart of the enemy's country. I am not speaking now of those who are so vulgar as to intrigue for invitations, but simply of the ambitious who wish to accept an invitation given in good faith because it is a step upward in the social scale. Of course I would not say that such an invitation should never be accepted, for there is often congeniality between the hostess and her guest; but it is not worth doing violence to one's feelings for the sake of accepting it. We say that we do not consider the "four hundred" really superior to many other

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hundreds in the city. In that case let us treat them and their invitations with exactly the same courtesy and exactly the same indifference that we show to our other friends and their invitations. I think a young girl is always justified in objecting to be pushed into society even when her parents are eager to push her; yet if the matter is urged, it will probably be best for her to gratify her parents, even at the sacrifice of her own sensitiveness. It is not for her to judge her parents. Even if they are wrong, their fault may be like the vanity of a child, because they are still in the childish stage of education, while the daughter's higher development is entirely due to their efforts in her behalf.

There are girls whose religious convictions forbid society, and then they are obliged to withstand their parents from the outset; yet I think such convictions are uncommon where the parents do not share them. But there are other girls who sincerely believe that their time can be better spent than in going to parties and making calls. The conventions of society seem meaningless to them, and they know if they observe them all they will have no time or strength for anything else, while if they do not observe them they will be stigmatized as rude, odd, and even as self-conceited. One cannot read even the most sensible book on etiquette without being oppressed with the feeling that a terrible addition has been made to the moral law in the by-laws which treat of visiting cards, and every writer on etiquette says mildly but firmly that there is a reason for all the rules in the very nature of things, and that if any of us venture to disregard them and substitute our own reason, we simply show our incapacity for appreciating real refinement. A part of this is no doubt true. The rules of society are reasonable for those who give their whole time to society. When a lady has four hundred people on her visiting list, and a call must be made on each one every winter on pain of losing the acquaintance altogether, to say nothing of party calls and receptions and afternoon teas, it is clear that a language of pasteboard simplifies her duties very much. But for any one who has a definite work in life outside of society, attention to all these minor points is impossible, and we must either be shut out of society altogether or be allowed to enter it on our own terms. The women who have their living to earn have the matter decided for them. Even in the few cases where they are welcomed among the *élite*, their work must always take precedence of society demands. And the same thing ought to be true in the case of good mothers. The care of one's own children never ought to be given up for any conventional duty. But the hardest case is that of young girls who wish their lives to be in earnest, and who have as yet no imperative duties. No wonder they wish to make duties for themselves. Is there any guide in deciding how far they are bound to follow conventions? I know nothing better than the dictum of the Hegelians. "Make your deed universal, and see what the result will be." If everybody who finds afternoon teas a burden stayed away from them, would any harm be done? If everybody who objects to making calls refused to make them, would it not soon simplify life even for those who do like to make them? If all people who chanced to meet felt at liberty to be as friendly as they felt like being, without any formal preliminaries, who would be injured? The question of absolute right is answered when these questions are answered, and we ought not to let any writer on etiquette persuade us to the contrary. But it is not so easy to say how far it is wise for anybody, particularly for young girls, to set themselves against the customs of their own circle. They then give up the friends they would naturally make, and it is sometimes hard to find equally congenial friends in other circles. Many a girl who might have been happily married if she had not rebelled against conventionalities is left to lead a lonely life; and that not because young men value conventionalities, but because society makes people acquainted. She will some day be likely to regret that she missed her opportunities, unless she had some more definite reason for her course than the mere shrinking from the effort society requires.

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Duties we make for ourselves are seldom entirely free from affectation. An ardent, active girl may easily become so interested in her charities and her studies that she may make a genuine plea that she is too busy for parties and calls; but perhaps she ought not to give up society duties until higher duties actually open before her. Is it not possible that society has some intrinsic worth, or that at all events it might have worth, if earnest people did their part? There is much to be done for the poor, but the poor are not the only ones to be helped. Sweetness of temper and honorable action tell as much sometimes in a game of cards as in an affair of state. The highest good anybody can ever do is to inspire others with a higher ideal, to raise the level of character. The specific act by which this is done matters little; in truth it is usually the result not of an act, but of a noble character influencing others unconsciously. One might give all her goods to feed the poor and not leave the world any better than she found it. On the other hand, I know a frank, light-hearted girl, whose whole mind seems to be absorbed in choosing the prettiest dresses she can find for her approaching *début*, who is sure to be a factor in elevating every company she enters, because of her scorn of any form of meanness. She would not trouble herself to say anything bitter if one of her acquaintances did a mean thing; but the amazed tone in which she would utter the word "Fancy!" would inflict a punishment no culprit could escape.

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Most of what is called society is no doubt poor and weak, and not worth much time or trouble. I think the girls whose pathway does not lead directly through it are perhaps to be congratulated. It is to be hoped that most women who reach the age of twenty-five will find something better to do than to give themselves up entirely to society. But though, as now constituted, its exactions are so heavy that it often seems as if it must be all or nothing, it need not inevitably be so. Society could be so conducted as to be a beautiful recreation instead of a business, and those who see this clearly can help to bring it about.

Society ought to give enjoyment in a refined way. Beautiful houses, beautiful dresses, music, cultivated voices in conversation, delicate wit, smiling faces, graceful dancing, all these things would make up an attractive picture to most of us if we could forget ourselves, and not feel that

our shadow was the most prominent part of it. It could not take the place of our serious daily life, but it ought to supplement it.

The French writer Amiel has given the most beautiful description of ideal society, and I will quote it here. It would, I think, be a good plan for every girl who wishes to give up society to consider this picture well. If society were always like this, would you wish to give it up? If it is not like this, may it not be possible for you to help to make it so? Is there any better work laid ready to your hand? If so, do it, by all means. If not, is not this well worth doing?

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It is thus that Amiel describes a small evening party: "Thirty people of the best society, a happy mingling of sexes and ages. Gray heads, young people, *spirituelle* faces. All framed in tapestries of Aubusson which gave a soft distance and a charming background to the groups in full dress.... In the world it is necessary to have the appearance of living on ambrosia and of being acquainted with only noble cares. Anxiety, want, passion do not exist. All realism is suppressed as brutal. In a word, what is called *le grand monde* presents for the moment a flattering illusion, that of being in an ethereal state and of breathing the life of mythology. That is the reason that all vehemence, every cry of nature, all true suffering, all careless familiarity, all open marks of passion, shock and jar in this delicate *milieu*, and destroy in a moment the whole fabric, the palace of clouds, the magic architecture raised by the consent of all.

"It is like the harsh cock-crow which causes all enchantment to vanish and puts the fairies to flight. These choice *réunions* act unconsciously towards a concert of eye and ear, towards an improvised work of art. This instinctive accord is a festival for the mind and taste, and transports the actors into the sphere of the imagination. It is a form of poetry, and it is thus that cultivated society renews by reflection the idyl which has disappeared....

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"Paradoxical or not, I believe that these fleeting attempts to reconstruct a dream which pursues beauty alone are confused recollections of the age of gold which haunts the human soul, or rather of aspirations towards the harmony of things which daily reality refuses to us, and to which we are introduced only by art."

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## XV.

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### NARROW LIVES.

What is a narrow life? Its causes almost always lie in character. One either has a narrow nature, or is subject to some tyrant who has a narrow nature. In such cases there is little hope of remedy.

But in general circumstances are not responsible for a narrow life. Illness and poverty indeed are hard to resist, nevertheless I hope to show by actual examples that broad lives are lived by the sick and poor.

Once at the wish of a friend I was visiting I went to carry some comforts to a neglected almshouse on a Western prairie. In the insane ward I found a poor young fellow suffering from epilepsy. There had been some brutal treatment in the almshouse and he had tried to escape. Being overtaken he had fought for his liberty, and in consequence he was afterwards fastened with a chain and ball of many pounds' weight. He could not be cared for elsewhere, as his family was very poor, and though usually perfectly sane he had dangerous intervals. The management of the almshouse was culpably bad, and though about this time benevolent persons began to bestir themselves, and there was some amelioration of conditions, yet this young man was certainly placed in as narrowing circumstances as could surround a human being. He was poor to the degree of pauperism, he had an incurable disease and he was almost absolutely in the power of tyrants. Remembering that my friend wished to lend some books to those of the poor creatures who could read, I asked him if he liked to read. He said yes, that he was very fond of reading, but could not get any books. I asked him what kind of books he would like. "Well," he said slowly, "I should be glad of anything; but I think I should like best stories or biographies which would tell me how people who were put in hard places met their lives. For," he added pathetically, "I want to make the most I can of my life." I felt as he spoke that these were the most heroic words I had ever heard or that I ever should hear. I left the town in a few days, and my friend at the same time changed her residence, so I have never known his fate. But I am sure no circumstances could make a life inspired with such a feeling a narrow one.

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Fortunately few people are so hemmed in by circumstances. But some of us think a single misfortune enough to crush us. How, for instance, is a woman prostrated by disease to make anything of the little life within her four walls?

I remember a woman who broke down at school and suffered so frequently from violent hemorrhages all her life, which was prolonged till she was nearly fifty, that she was seldom able to leave her room. Her home was on a farm a long distance from the village, so that it at first seemed as if she could not have even the ordinary alleviation of cheerful society in her more comfortable days. Another aggravation in her case was that she had an active temperament and

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strong mind. She had been fitting herself to be a teacher, and she had just the qualities which would have made her an admirable teacher, a clear intellect, quick observation, firm will, love of children, and a perfectly serene temper. She had wished to teach, partly because she thought she should find it an inspiring work, and partly because she wished to help the family. She saw this was not to be, that in spite of herself she must be a burden on the family. She met her altered circumstances with the same firm will and cheerful temper she had shown from childhood. If she must be a burden on others she would make that burden as light as she could. She would not suggest that any one should sit in her darkened room all day, however lonely she might be. She would not call upon others for the hundred little services not absolutely necessary, but still so very agreeable to one who is weak and helpless. On the other hand, she would not exert herself rashly in the vain endeavor to wait on herself when such an exertion was likely to injure her, and in the end to bring more care on other people. She always spoke cheerfully even when her voice could not rise above a whisper. She was ready to admit the sunshine the moment she could bear the light. As she lay alone she tried to think of some pleasant thing to say or do when any one should come in, and in this way she beguiled the tedious hours.

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Of course she had her reward. No one could be unwilling to take care of one so unexacting. Moreover, although she often unavoidably taxed the strength of her friends, she did so much to make them happy that nursing her was a pleasant task. Her mother and sisters wished to be in her room as much as possible, not for her sake, but for their own enjoyment. She never asked them to read aloud to her, for instance, but she was such an appreciative listener that they could never be quite satisfied with reading any interesting book to themselves. They enjoyed it doubly with her wise and witty comments. She had a keen sense of humor which it has always seemed to me goes a long way in broadening any life,—and naturally everybody saved the best jokes to relate in her room. She was frequently too ill to laugh without danger of a hemorrhage, but she soon learned to control herself so that she laughed with her eyes alone. The girls from the village, instead of feeling it a duty to visit her in her sickness, considered it a privilege to be admitted to her room. When she was able to sit up they would come by twos and threes and bring their work and chat until she was tired. She had the kind of character which made gossip impossible with her, so that she always got at the very best her visitors had to give, and the *very best* of even a shallow girl is often worth something. Her friends, however, felt it was she who gave to them because of her uplifting power.

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She was sometimes able to read and she carried on her education systematically, though necessarily with many interruptions. She had a gift for drawing and amused herself often in that way, though, it was always a sorrow to her that she had had too little instruction to produce anything of value to others. She was not altogether shut out from beauty. Her room gave her a view of the sunset every day, and she purposely left her curtain up for an hour in the evening to watch the march of the stars. She had the unspotted beauty of the snow in the winter, and of the grass and flowers in the summer. Sometimes she was even able to walk about the dooryard a little and gather flowers for herself. She always had a few house plants in which she took a strong interest, and which accordingly flourished.

She was a public-spirited woman and was glad to be made one of the trustees of the Public Library. She was one of the most efficient members of the board, though she was seldom strong enough to be driven as far as the library building.

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She was determined that her sisters' lives should not be trammelled by her weakness. The fact that she could not go to a place was all the more reason why her sisters should go and tell her about it. One sister was a teacher who at first wished to take the neighboring district school rather than a much finer position in a distant city simply for the sake of being constantly with the beloved invalid. But the latter would not allow this. "I shall never be able to go West myself, you know," she said cheerfully, "but if you go and I have your letters every week, I shall know exactly what it is like. And you will be so much more entertaining in vacations than if you stay at home."

By the same course of reasoning the sick sister persuaded the teacher to go abroad to study a year when the opportunity came. "The photographs you bring home will mean a great deal more to me than any I could buy," she said. "I shall almost feel as if I had seen the pictures themselves." Every letter which came from the absent sister did inclose some imponderable unmounted photograph, with comments. The sister at home, studying these one by one, learned almost more of the meaning of the pictures than the one who saw their visible beauty. One of my friends says, "There is nothing which so destroys the æsthetic sense as to see too many beautiful pictures at once." This truth, perhaps, explains why so many people see all the great paintings of the world and yet have so little appreciation of any of them. At all events, our invalid did gain both happiness and spiritual insight from the hints of beauty she found in these humble little photographs.

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I have before said that she was not left without companions. She also had friends in the highest sense. Having the leisure to make friendship a chief business of life she was able to be so much to her friends that however busy they might be they could not afford to neglect her. The day of leisurely letter writing seems to have passed by. But she had long hours by herself when she could write out the good and pleasant things she was thinking about. Her letters were lovely, and strong, and helpful, and each was written with such exquisite penmanship, with such easy lines of beauty, that it was like a work of art in itself.

She was not obliged even to forego the happiness of love. She had a young lover at the time her health failed. He would not believe at first that there was no cure for her. Her instinct had been

so true that she had chosen a perfectly loyal lover whose love could not be shaken by misfortune. At last he was himself attacked by a terrible disease, and it was seldom possible for the two to meet after that. But they faced their trouble together. They said that if the time should ever come when they could be married they should rejoice; but if it never came they would be all they could to each other. Sometimes even letters were impossible between them, but their perfect reliance upon each other was a constant source of strength and happiness, and their rare interviews were true radiant points in their lives.

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Of course no one would think of calling this woman's life a narrow one, and yet the only reason it was not so lay in herself.

I know another woman whose poverty would seem to many people an effectual bar to any breadth of life. As poverty is a relative term, I will state definitely that she receives less than three hundred dollars a year for teaching a difficult village school, and that the whole support of her frail and delicate mother has fallen upon her except that the two together own their heavily mortgaged little home. A servant being out of the question, she rises very early in the morning to do as much of the heavier housework as possible. Her washing, of course, has to be done on Saturday. Some of us in such a case would be content with a low standard of cleanliness—but she has an ideal, and her house and herself fairly sparkle with neatness. Her exquisite cooking is a special grace of economy, for it makes it possible that a frugal table should seem to be richly spread. Of course she and her mother must do their own sewing, and they do it so well that they always have the air of being dressed as ladies, with great simplicity, to be sure, but with excellent taste.

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At this point, I fancy my readers will make one of two comments. They will say, "She must have an iron constitution," or "She must spend all her time on material things. She cannot have a moment for books or society or travel."

Now she has not an iron constitution. She suffered in her youth from a wasting disease, and her physician says she was nearer death than any person he ever knew to recover. This disease has left its traces upon her. There is hardly a year when she does not have to be out of school a week or two for illness, and of course sick headaches and trifling ailments of that kind have to be met every few days.

Nor is it true that the daily necessities absorb her whole life. Obviously, she cannot be a great reader, or rather it is fortunate she is not so, for if she spent all her little leisure over books, she would miss much that is inspiring in her life. But she does care for books, and particularly for the best books, though her school education was limited. She reads a tiny daily paper and always takes a leading magazine. She owns Shakespeare and Scott and Shelley, and knows them almost by heart. She borrows the best of her friends' books, and occasionally buys a cheap classic. She always has some volume of biography or travel from the Public Library, which she reads leisurely with her mother perhaps. It may take her a month to read some little volume of two or three hundred pages—such a volume as Bradford Torrey's "Rambler's Lease," or Dr. Emerson's memoir of his father—and possibly she may not be able in the end to quote any more fluently from these books than another who reads them through in an afternoon, although I think she usually is able, but her advantage is that she thoroughly enjoys the flavor of every sentence; her reading stimulates and encourages her and makes her happy.

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She was one of the founders of the Book Club in the village, and as the Public Library grew out of that, there was considerable work to be done by some of the members, and of this she did much more than her share.

She is one of the most active members also of the Reading Club and the Natural History Club, two organizations which combine culture and society quite as effectually as the more ambitious circles in our cities. Her house is always hospitably open to either of these clubs, for she loves society and wishes to make the most of all the intelligent people in the place who belong to one or the other of them. Her sociability, however, carries her farther. She knows everybody in the town well enough for a bow and smile in passing, and that is no small achievement in a modern village where the population is so fluctuating. I would suggest that we try for a moment to recall the difference it makes in the cheerfulness of our day whether all the people we meet have a pleasant word for us or not; and then, I think, we shall see that her influence is by no means slight or worthless. Perhaps it is a little candle, but it throws its beams far.

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She likes to go to see her friends, and she faithfully returns the semi-formal calls which cannot be avoided even in the most unfashionable centres. She makes her own callers heartily welcome, and even invites a friend or two to tea now and then. She is always hospitably ready to entertain visitors from a distance, and consequently she often has the pleasant variety of going away on a visit herself.

She likes to go to the public entertainments of the village. A sewing society, a Sunday-school picnic, or a fair attracts her. These are simple pleasures, but taken with such a spirit as hers, they are innocent and wholesome, even if they seem barren to an outsider.

She always does her part at all such gatherings. She is ready to serve on any committee. She will make delicious cake for a Grand Army supper, or sell flowers in aid of the Village Improvement Society. One would hardly expect her to have time for such duties, but one of the strong points in her character is that she never has any inclination to shirk a responsibility that belongs to her, and she is generous in her interpretation of her responsibilities. It has always interested me to

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see the persistency with which she pays the extra fraction of a cent when any expense is to be divided among several people. She knows the full value of a cent, for she has to count the cost of everything; but she evidently takes a brave pride in always doing a little more rather than a little less than justice requires her to do. She has perhaps too great a scorn of receiving help from anybody. She once acted as a substitute in school for a friend who was ill. The obliged friend insisted that she should receive the ten dollars which would otherwise have been paid to herself. But the independent young lady instantly took the money and invested it all in a beautiful piece of lace which she sent as a present to the convalescent. I know of no one who acts more thoroughly on the rule, "If you have but sixpence to spend, spend it like a prince, and not like a beggar."

She is a true lover of nature, without pretense or cant of any kind. She has an eye for flowers,—indeed her little garden is the delight of the neighborhood,—and she finds harebells on Thanksgiving Day and ferns in midwinter. She knows the minerals in the stone-walls, and likes to trace the course of old glaciers across the farms beyond the village. And she likes, too, to stroll through the woods, or to float in her dory on the river, without a thought of mineralogy or botany while she softly repeats poetry for which she has a real love.

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Of course she has not a large margin of income for luxuries, but she does take a journey now and then, and she enjoys her journeys with a zest which would surprise many travelers.

She has not much money to give away; and yet she often adds a modest contribution to a subscription paper for some unfortunate neighbor. And she has lent her boat a hundred times to people who otherwise could not have one to use. More than that, she will go herself and row for some child or old person who cannot manage the oars, but who stands on the bank and looks wishfully at the river. I have never known anybody who owned a carriage to give half so much pleasure to other people with it, as she gives with her boat. She is always ready to "lend a hand." She has watched with a great many sick people, for instance. Most of her kindnesses are unobtrusive, and she forgets them the next day, but they make a definite addition to the comfort and happiness of the world.

"I always like to have Miss Amidon come in to spend the evening", said a nervous, critical, intellectual man, most of whose life had been passed among far more pretentious people in large cities, "there is such a sunny atmosphere about her."

Where does Miss Amidon get the strength to do so many good things? She is not a common woman of course, and yet there is nothing striking about her. She does nothing great. I have no reason to suppose that her teaching even is above the average. I think the rare quality in her character, however, is that she spends the little strength and money she has on *essentials*, and so there is always something to show for them.

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I once had a friend who was told by several physicians that she had an incurable disease. Her own home was gone, and she did not wish to be dependent upon others. She had been a teacher, and she resolved to go on teaching. There would be months at a time when she would be obliged to rest, but then, with unflinching courage, she went back to her work. Once, when she was only able to sit up a few hours in the day, she took a position in a boarding-school, where her board was but a trifle, and was given to her for her instruction of one or two small classes which could recite in her room where she was propped up in an easy-chair.

She had a religious nature, and thought calmly of death, while she felt that in this world her plain duty was to make the most of her life. She bore her suffering without complaint, did not allow herself to be anxious, took all measures she could to alleviate her pain and to improve her health, and was then free to enjoy the few pleasures still within her reach. As a result, she grew better, and for half a dozen years was able to support herself well by teaching in a difficult school. In order to do this, however, she had to live within very narrow lines. Her disease was of such a nature, that her diet had to be confined almost entirely to one article. This made it seem best for her to live in a hotel where she could have little home life. And such a diet at times became almost nauseating. It was necessary for her to save all her strength for her daily work, so she had to put aside even the few pleasures otherwise within her reach. What made this the harder was that she had never taught from love of the work, though her fine intelligence and conscientiousness made her an excellent teacher.

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"First, I have to consider my health," she said. "Then I must think of my work. And that does not leave much room for other things."

But for her determined and heroic observance of the laws of health, her life must have been a wreck. Her strong good sense not only saved her from being a burden to others, but enabled her to do a really valuable work for her scholars, which I have seldom known any one capable of doing so well. And all her friends were strengthened by the spectacle of her cheerful courage. The few years she won for herself by her steadfast struggle would have been well worth living, even if she had had no alleviations of her lot. But she gladly took such little pleasures as were in her pathway. She chose a pleasant room in the hotel with a wide outlook over the sea. She spent some happy hours with her favorite German books, and in a quiet, friendly way she made the acquaintance of any congenial people who came to the hotel. All this was not very much, perhaps, but yet it seems fine to me. So many of us would have spent our strength in mourning our hard fate! I am sure that all of us who had the privilege of knowing her must always think of her with

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reverence.

I know a woman whose deafness shuts her out from ordinary conversation, and who is nevertheless such an interesting talker and such an appreciative listener that her friends do not find it a task to spend hours in talking through her ear-trumpet. Of course each friend brings only his best to her ears. The very circumstance which would have narrowed her life if her nature had been narrow, has simply shut off much that is low from her and left full room for the expansion of all that is high.

I knew two women on whom blindness fell in middle life. One with morbid grief stayed always in her own room. She became totally dependent on others and wore away her years in sorrow. The other gave up the luxurious rooms she occupied in a hotel, took a lodging-house, which she was able largely to manage herself, made it a delightful home for every inmate, and kept herself usefully busy and happy. Each of these women had an only sister entirely devoted to her. One of them narrowed and the other broadened her sister's life.

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I am almost tempted to say there are no narrow lives except for narrow natures. But there are many timid and loving women who are forced to lead restricted lives by domestic tyrants,—a despotic father or husband, or even sometimes an imperious mother or sister,—and who yet under other circumstances might expand like a flower. The only help for such women is in cultivating courage. And it is necessary to remember that the self-sacrifice which helps others to be their best is good, while that which suffers them to be tyrants is bad.

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## XVI.

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### CONCLUSION: A MISCELLANEOUS CHAPTER.

In these pages I have not catalogued the virtues which make up the character of a fine woman, but I think I have made it clear that every woman should be truthful and loving, courageous and modest. No two women are alike, and sometimes one virtue dominates and sometimes another. And we must always be on our guard against the faults of our qualities. A gentle woman is in danger of being cowardly, and a firm woman of being obstinate. There is one danger which seems to be peculiarly powerful with women; that of sacrificing too much to the people nearest them. A woman knows positively that more is required of her than it is fair she should give, and yet she gives it, and in most cases she feels a certain satisfaction of conscience in giving it. Her renunciation comes partly because she loves those for whom she makes the sacrifice, but partly also from cowardice. So far as it is simple renunciation, I have not much to say. If Jane Welsh had not sacrificed herself to Carlyle's unreasonable demands, it is certain that she might have contributed something of permanent value to literature, and if Carlyle's colossal egotism had thus been pruned, his own contribution probably would have been of higher quality; but as the question of sacrifice came up day by day, she could hardly measure results, and she did feel the necessity of struggling with her own selfishness. Life is so much more than literature that I cannot help thinking she did right, though Carlyle did wrong in allowing her to efface herself for him. But most women go farther than this. They allow themselves to be blinded by their wish to please those nearest them. They wish it were right to yield one point after another, and they finally do yield and hope they are not doing wrong, though if they did not firmly shut their eyes, they must see that they are. I think this is even more fatal to a noble character than deliberately to choose the wrong, because it confuses moral distinctions and makes one weak as well as wicked. I suppose more good women have failed in this way than in any other.

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English novelists describe American girls as exquisitely beautiful, stylish, quick-witted, energetic, and good-tempered, while the mothers are portrayed as awkward, dowdy, stupid, and ill-educated, though honest and kind. We resent the distortion of this picture, for in America, as elsewhere, girls are largely what they are made by their mothers, yet we do have certain conditions which make sharp contrasts between mothers and daughters more common here than elsewhere.

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This is especially so in the present generation, for the last fifty years have been a transition period in woman's education. Before that, there were no good schools for girls in America, though the country academies did what they could; and in a few of the large cities there was a small class of wealthy people who had private teachers for their girls in music, French, dancing, and perhaps literature.

Then came the establishment of high-class boarding schools for girls, so endowed that they were within the reach of people of moderate means. The eager, ambitious, half-educated mothers sent their bright daughters to these schools. The best class of girls from the country towns everywhere now met each other, and mingled, too, with many girls who had had the opportunities of city life. The teachers in these schools were women of high character and real refinement, and though they were not all accustomed to the usages of society, there were always some among them who were so, and who gave a certain finish to the solid work of the others. The

advantages of these boarding-school girls were so far beyond those of the previous generation that the line between mothers and daughters became abnormally broad. The son had advantages at college which his father had not, but after all, he went to the same college, and the progress was natural.

Then the high schools were opened to girls, and thousands were able to get a fair education whose mothers had had no opportunities whatever. And then about thirty years ago, colleges for women sprang up, and the young women of our day have the same advantages as the young men. [Pg 221]

Mothers must always, of course, expect to be outstripped in some directions by their daughters. Indeed, they wish to have it so, for they wish to have their daughters stand on as high ground as possible; but when the process goes on as rapidly as it has done through the wonderful opening of the means of education in the last half century, it has a painful side. Especially is it so in this country, where there is such a spirit of equality that in spite of all the barriers of caste, the daughter of a wholly unrefined mother may occupy a high position. In England a clever daughter may have a stupid mother, but a refined daughter is not very likely to have a mother who is outwardly coarse, because class lines have been drawn so distinctly for many generations that mother and daughter have essentially the same kind of education and see essentially the same kind of people. In America this is the exception instead of the rule, though now that the highest education is open to all women, the chances are that the contrasts will be less sharp in future.

But at present the gulf between mother and daughter is often so wide that it requires more than tact to bridge it. A sense of duty will keep a daughter outwardly kind and respectful to her mother, but love is the mother's only real security; and a mother must be thoroughly good at heart and refined in feeling to hold the warm love of a daughter whose intellectual tastes and social standards she outrages every moment. On the other hand, if the daughter's education has not taught her that character is more than intellect, it is worse than useless. [Pg 222]

"Intellect separates," said Dr. James Freeman Clarke, "but love unites." Here lies the key to this problem.

I have said little of marriage, for the subject is difficult. A thoroughly high-minded woman will not be likely to marry unworthily, and she may be trusted to meet the problems that rise after marriage in a worthy manner. The special difficulties in each pathway will depend on temperament and circumstances, and no general rules can be laid down for meeting them.

I hold to the old-fashioned doctrine that a true marriage opens the way to the best and happiest life for both men and women. Anything less than a true marriage is intolerable and debasing.

But girls can hardly choose whether they will be married or not. They can say No to all offers, and some women do plan for opportunities to say Yes, yet most of us feel that there are few circumstances in which a girl of noble instincts could take the initiative. [Pg 223]

Can parents do anything? Certainly not in the way of trying to win a particular lover; but they may so educate their daughter as to make her attractive to such a man as they would wish her to marry, provided that such an education does not sacrifice higher interests; and then they may give her the opportunity to see as many such men as possible in her own home, and in other places where the standards are as high as in her own home.

What are the qualities which most attract men? It is hard to say, because many of the women most loved in their own families and by other women are not interesting to even the best of men. Probably warm-heartedness and sweetness of character stand first in the list, and these are qualities worth cultivating for themselves. Vitality and high spirits count for much, also. Beauty I think comes next, even with men who do not care for mere beauty. I do not think we should be indignant at this. But can beauty be cultivated? Good health does something for the complexion. Care of the teeth adds another point of beauty. Even rough hair may be made beautiful by constant brushing. A good carriage and a gentle voice are points of beauty that depend partly on ourselves. Taste may be used in dress without sacrificing simplicity. Scrupulous cleanliness adds a charm of its own. All these attractions may be cultivated without nourishing the noxious weed of vanity, which many mothers dread so much. And is it not natural that a man who can appreciate a good and intelligent woman should find her still more winning if she has a sweet, fresh face and a trim dress? [Pg 224]

Next we must place domestic tastes. Of course a cook and seamstress and housekeeper can be hired, and it is quite true that the home instinct is not the highest in the universe; but it is a fine one, nevertheless, and at all events it does influence most men in marriage.

Intelligent men like intelligent wives, and value a certain brightness of mind; but it must be admitted that few men care to marry intellectual women unless such women have the tact to keep their gifts somewhat in the background. (I may here say,—it is not worth more than a parenthesis—that the infallible rule for securing some kind of a husband is to be able to flatter a man, either by a real or pretended interest in him, or a real or pretended admiration of his powers. But I hope I have no reader who would wish for marriage on such terms, so I will not catalogue any attractions which ought not to win.) You remember how Charles Lamb speaks of his Cousin Bridget's knowledge of English literature. "If I had twenty girls, they should all be

educated in exactly the same way. Their chances of marriage might not be increased by it, but if worst came to worst, it would make them most incomparable old maids." If a woman is not married in the end, the wider and deeper her education goes, the happier and more useful she is; and yet can we deny that a very wide education is likely to repel rather than attract even highly educated men?

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My own solution of the difficulty would be to give a girl the best education within reach, but to lay such stress on warm-heartedness and sweet temper that her intellectual attainments would not stand out prominently and concentrate all attention on them. I should do this, not chiefly as a matter of policy, but because it seems to me the only way to preserve the true balance between emotion and thought essential to an ideal character.

It may be said that all the qualities I have discussed are rather superficial, and that it is only when two people have high aims in common that they are capable of the best kind of love on which alone a true marriage can be based. And that is right. All education ought to tend to make a girl noble, and no motive of marriage ought to be held up before her. But I cannot think it is idle for her parents and friends to try to make her attractive as well as good, and I cannot think a man is to be blamed who chooses between two high-minded women the one who has graces as well as gifts.

Another subject which it may be thought ought not to be left untouched in any volume dealing with women is that of the suffrage. I must frankly own that though I have thought much upon this subject I have not been able to come to positive conclusions about it. I am glad for all the freedom women have gained. I wish to see them entirely free. I think a woman needs to be free in order to reach the highest nobility; but it is inward freedom which we most need, and that is independent of circumstances. Epictetus, a slave, won as complete inward freedom as Marcus Aurelius, an emperor.

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I see so many arguments on both sides of the question that I am always vacillating between them, and it would therefore be impossible for me to treat the matter here. All I can say is, that the longer I live the more I am convinced that it is personal character which most helps the world forward, and I think our hearty allegiance to the truth which we clearly see will in the end teach us new truth.

I began this little book in the hope of saying some helpful words to girls. I have found it necessary to think of them as having grown into women. I cannot take leave of them without fancying them as they will be in old age.

Charles Dudley Warner once visited the Mary Institute at St. Louis. He was asked to make a speech, and after glancing at the five hundred beautiful young girls before him, he turned to the fine faces of the teachers, many of whom were gray-haired, and said:—

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"It is a beautiful thing to be a charming young lady; and the best of it is that you will sometime have a chance to be a charming old lady!"

All old ladies are not charming, but a great many of them are; and would not all of us be so if we could follow the prescriptions I have given so liberally for the conduct of life all the way through? Suppose we were all sweet-tempered and warm-hearted and truthful, and as neat and pretty as we could be, and bright and intelligent and modest and helpful—do you not think we should be charming even if our eyes were dim and our ears dull, and we walked with a cane?

Nevertheless, there is one practical rule that old people must never forget. They must keep growing as long as they live. Your temper must be sweeter at forty than it was at twenty, and sweeter at sixty than at forty, if it is to seem sweet at all when your bright eyes and red lips are gone. We can pardon a sharp word from an inexperienced young girl, who speaks hastily without reflection, but we cannot pardon it so easily from a woman who has had a lifetime to reflect.

If you would keep fresh in body, you must not pay too much attention to rheumatic twinges, and sit still in a corner because you are too stiff to rise. Take your painful walk, and you will be less stiff when you come back. You will have fresh life from outside, and not be a burden to younger lives impatient of your chimney corner.

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One of my friends, who is nearly eighty, has taken a trip to Kansas this winter, and has been delighted with the new life she has seen. I need not say that her delight makes her delightful to others. "You need not suppose," she writes, "that I am going to settle down and be an old lady yet. I am planning a visit to California next year."

Mrs. Horace Mann and Miss Elizabeth Peabody were both nearly eighty when they went to Washington on official business—something in reference to the Indian troubles, I believe. I have already cited my mother's friend who began to study botany at ninety. And why not? If the end of knowledge was to help us to get our daily bread, we might at last fold our hands; but if it is to open our minds to the glory of the universe, to make us more worthy to be the immortal souls we hope we are, why should we not be just as eager to learn at ninety as at nine?

A sensitive woman is sure to have many and many an experience in life which will make her heart sad and sore; but I think that every brave and good woman will also feel more and more, as time

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