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MODERN WOMEN

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AND

WHAT IS SAID OF THEM

A REPRINT OF

A SERIES OF ARTICLES IN THE

SATURDAY REVIEW

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

Mrs. LUCIA GILBERT CALHOUN

NEW YORK

J. S. REDFIELD, PUBLISHER

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ADVERTISEMENT. [ix]

The following papers on Woman were originally published in the columns of the London SATURDAY REVIEW. Some of them have already been reprinted in the literary and daily journals of this country, and they have excited no little discussion and comment among readers of both sexes.

Whether agreeing or not with the writer, it is impossible not to concede the eminent ability with which the various subjects are handled. No series of essays has appeared in the English language for many years which has been so extensively reprinted and so generally read.

The authorship of these papers has been attributed to different individuals, male and female; but it is more than probable that the writers whose names have been mentioned in this connection are precisely those who have had nothing whatever to do with them. It is not unlikely that, in due time, the publisher of this volume may be in possession of authentic information on this head, and that the name of the author may then appear on the title-page.

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INTRODUCTION.

The "Woman Question" will not be put to silence. It demands an answer of Western legislators. It besets college faculties. It pursues veteran politicians to the fastnesses of so-called National Conventions. Under the sacred sounding-boards of New England pulpits has its voice been heard, and its unexpected ally, the London Saturday Review, introduces it to the good society of English drawing-rooms. That this introduction comes in the form of diatribe and denunciation is a matter of the least moment. Judgment will finally rest, not on the conclusions of the special pleader, but on the strength of the case of the accused.

Something, clearly, is wrong with fashionable women. They accept the thinnest gilt, the poorest pinchbeck, for gold. They care more for a dreary social pre-eminence than for home and children. They find in extravagance of living and a vulgar costliness of dress their only expression of a vague desire for the beauty and elegance of life. Is it, therefore, to be inferred that the race of noble women is dying out? St. Paul was hardly less severe than the London Saturday, if less explicit, in his condemnation of the fashionable women of his day, yet we look upon that day as heroic. Certainly neither London nor New York can rival the luxury of a rich Roman matron, yet it was not the luxury of her women which destroyed the empire, and Brutus's Portia was quite as truly a representative woman as the superb Messalina. John Knox thought that things were as bad as they could possibly be when he thundered at vice in high places; and if there had been a John Knox in the court of Charles the Second, he would have sighed for a return of the innocent days of his great-grandfather.

On the whole, that hope which springs eternal suggests that the fashionable women of the reign of Victoria, and of our seventeenth President, are not essentially more discouraging than all the generations of the thoughtless fair who danced idly down forgotten pasts. Nay, we may even hope that they are better. If they will not actually think, yet the fatal contagion of the newspaper and the modern novel communicates to them an intellectual irritation which might almost stand for a mental process. If they have not ideas, they have notions of things, and however inexact and absurd these may be, they are better than emptiness.

"Worse, decidedly worse," says our implacable critic; "when women were content with looking pretty before marriage, and with good housekeeping after, they were uninteresting certainly, but they were respectable. Now they dabble in all things; are weakly æsthetic, weakly scientific, weakly controversial, and wholly prosy, and contemptible." Dabbling is pitiful, certainly, and weakness has few allies, but let us do justice even to the weak dabblers. Æsthetic, or scientific, or controversial training has but recently been made possible to women. Their previous range of study had been very narrow. It is not strange that the least attainments should seem to them very profound and satisfactory, and the most manifest deductions pass for original conclusions. It is natural that their undisciplined faculties should grapple feebly with difficulties, and be quite unequal to argument. This is no reason for flinging the baffling volumes at their heads; better so educate their heads that the volumes shall no longer baffle.

Scolded because they have not an idea beyond dress, laughed at when they try to think of something better, a word may certainly be said for the good temper and the patience even of the fashionable women, who would be wiser if they could.

The fault is, we are assured, that these women take up books only to enhance their matrimonial value, and with no thought of the worth of study. Let us be just. What business or the professions are to most men, marriage is to most women. Men qualify themselves, if they can, for that competitive examination which is always going on, and which insures clients to the best lawyers, and business to the best merchant, and parishes to the best preacher. Women, compelled to wait at home for the wooing which changes their destiny, qualify themselves with attractions for that competitive examination which all marriageable young women feel that they undergo from every marriageable young man. Each has an eye to business. One does not feel that the motive in the one case is any higher than in the other.

It is very bad, of course, that marriage should be a matter of business. It is, perhaps, the most tragic of all perversions. But, evidently, the evil is not to be abated by jeremiads, nor by lectures to young women, no, nor even by brilliant editorials. So long as women believe that inglorious ease is better than work, so long as they are taught that they are born to be the gentle dependents of a stronger being, so long as courage and capacity are held to be "strong-minded,"

so long as the range of employments for women is narrow, and the standard of wages lower than men's, so long they will seek in marriage a home, a larger liberty of action, an establishment, a servant who shall supply them with money and insure them ease without effort of their own.

Men take the business opening which seems most congenial and most profitable. Women do the same thing, and their choice naturally falls upon marriage as altogether the most promising speculation of their very small list. The remedy seems to be to give women as thorough mental training as men receive, to make their training tend as directly to the business of earning their bread and their pretty feminine adornments, and for the same work to pay them the same wages. If it be objected that fashionable women will not work, let it be answered that work itself would be fashionable if it were held to be a dignity, and not a drudgery, and that the really fine and thoughtful leaders of society could easily establish the new order of things. In an aristocratic country, where labor is the badge of caste, it would be difficult to make it honorable. In a democracy like our own, it is the most contemptible snobbishness which frowns on the honest earning of money. [18]

The accusation of prodigal and senseless expenditure in dress must stand unrefuted. Sums which would adorn our cities with pleasure-gardens, with libraries, with galleries of art, are spent on perishable gauds that have not even beauty to commend them. Charities might be founded, lives be enriched with travel, all lands laid under contribution with the money that every year flows into Stewart's drawers, and the strong-boxes of fashionable dress-makers. But the jewelled prodigals who spend it are not more selfish, perhaps, than we plain folks who carp.

Again, it is a mistake. They have the money. They mean to secure all the pleasure that money can buy. They have that feminine sensuousness which delights in color, and odor, and richness of fabric. Their sense of beauty is untaught. A little lower in the scale of civilization they would pierce their noses, and dye their finger-nails, and wear strings of glass beads. A little higher, they would sacrifice the splendid shawl to a rare marble, banish the chromo-lithograph, and turn the solitaire ear-drops into a lovely picture, and build a conservatory with the price of lace flounces. A little higher still, and we might have model lodging-houses, and foundling hospitals, and music in the squares given us by kindly women who had saved the money from milliner, and jeweller, and silk-mercer. [19]

But standing just where they are, clothes seem to these same undeveloped women the best things money can buy; and a lack of culture confuses them as to the attributes of clothes. Just now our fashionable women are bitterly reprehended for copying the dress of the "Anonymas," who establish the very pronounced fashions of Paris. Half of them do not know what model they have taken. The other half accept the various and tasteless costumes, not because they are devised by "Anonyma," but because they are striking. There is something in the commonplaceness of fashionable life which smothers all originality of thought, of action, even of device in costume; and the women who give most time and money to dress, to whom one would look for perfection in that mixed art, are almost invariably the women who are exact reproductions of their neighbors in this regard, as in their house-furnishing, their equipages, and their manners.

Upon these splendidly monotonous fine ladies flashes the vision of "Anonyma," with her meretricious beauty, and her daring toilettes. Amenable to no social Mrs. Grundy, her love of dress develops itself in bold contrasts of color, in bizarre and showy ornaments, in picturesque, and often in grotesque and tawdry effects. But whatever the details, the whole is always striking. Our women longing for the new, accept the absurd; desiring the picturesque, take the bizarre, and eager for the elegant, content themselves with the costly. [20]

Nor does the fact that our present fashionable evening costume is immodest, of necessity impugn the modesty of the women who wear it. That they are wanting in fineness of perception must be admitted. But women of fashion accept without question the dictum of their modistes. La Belle Hamilton, the famous beauty of the reign of Charles the Second, so delicately modest and pure that she passed unbreathed upon by scandal through that most dissolute court, is painted in a costume that the fastest of New York belles would not venture to wear at the most fashionable of receptions. The gracious and self-sacrificing and womanly women of our revolution, wore dresses cut lower than those of their great-grand-daughters, as any portrait-gallery will show. The dress is indefensible, but let us not be too ready to condemn the wearer for worse sins than thoughtlessness and vanity.

One doubts if there is a single Becky Sharp the less, (poor Becky!) since Thackeray gave such terrible immortality to their great prototype. The satirist is not the reformer. The satirized do not see themselves in the exaggerated type. They go their way, and thank God that they are not as these others. The critic of the London Saturday, beginning, perhaps, with the intention of telling sad and sober truth about a class, has ended with a list of the follies and faults of individuals, and these are set down with the keen and unconvincing clearness of the satirist. [21]

It is a good thing indeed, that any aspect of the "woman question" should claim place, week after week, in a leading English journal. It is a good thing that it has been thought wise to reprint these essays here. All this talk about the wrong ways of women suggests that there is a right way, as yet very much involved in the dust of discussion and the fogs of speculation. All these accusations against her folly imply a proportionate tribute to her possible wisdom, if once she can get a fair chance to be wise.

What the reviewer urges against the effect of fashionable life on the intellect, cannot be

gainsayed. But in America, at least, the injury to the young men is greater apparently than to the young women. At any evening party in New York, at any "Hop" in Newport or Saratoga, the faces of the men are of a lower type, their talk is more inane, their manners are more vulgar. The girls are empty enough, heaven knows! but they seem capable of better things, most of them. And they are not so wholly spoiled in character. I have found very fashionable girls capable of large sacrifices for love, or kindred, or obedience to some divine voice. This proves that they have only to be taught that there is something better than being very fashionable, to take it thankfully. But the men seemed sordid and selfish, and grown worldly-wise before their time. [22]

Yet it might make us both more just and more generous to remember that during our time of peril as a nation, these very ranks of purposeless men furnished us soldiers and money, and a cheerful faith in the cause, just as these very legions of idle women gave us workers and nurses.

There is this cheer for American readers of these pages: What we have been told is our national sin of extravagance, the too pronounced character of our social life, the frivolity and ignorance of our women, the lack of a universal and high-toned society, we find not to be inborn defects peculiar to our system of government, and hopeless of change, but vices, also, of an old and cultivated and dignified nation.

A cheerful optimist may well believe that we are in a transition state; that women, impatient of the old life which was without thought and culture and motive, in the blind struggle to something better have fallen for the time on something worse; that with the movement of the age toward mutual helpfulness, man to man, women will move not less steadily, if more slowly, and come gradually into truer relations with each other and with men. It will not hurt woman to be criticised. She has too long been assured of her angelhood, and denied her womanhood. It will not help her very greatly to be criticised as if she were being tomahawked. If they who come to scoff would but remain to teach! There has been much ungentle judgment of men by women, of women by men. Thoreau said, "Man is continually saying to Woman, 'Why are you not more wise?' Woman is continually saying to Man, 'Why are you not more loving?' Unless each is both wise and loving there can be no real growth." [23]

L. G. C.

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THE

MODERN WOMEN.

THE GIRL OF THE PERIOD.

Time was when the stereotyped phrase, "a fair young English girl," meant the ideal of womanhood; to us, at least, of home birth and breeding. It meant a creature generous, capable, and modest; something franker than a Frenchwoman, more to be trusted than an Italian, as brave as an American, but more refined, as domestic as a German and more graceful. It meant a girl who could be trusted alone if need be, because of the innate purity and dignity of her nature, but who was neither bold in bearing nor masculine in mind; a girl who, when she married, would be her husband's friend and companion, but never his rival; one who would consider their interests identical, and not hold him as just so much fair game for spoil; who would make his house his true home and place of rest, not a mere passage-place for vanity and ostentation to go through; a tender mother, an industrious house-keeper, a judicious mistress. We prided ourselves as a nation on our women. We thought we had the pick of creation in this fair young English girl of ours, and envied no other men their own. [26]

We admired the languid grace and subtle fire of the South; the docility and affectionateness of the East seemed to us sweet and simple and restful; the vivacious sparkle of the trim and sprightly Parisienne was a pleasant little excitement when we met with it in its own domain; but our allegiance never wandered from our brown-haired girls at home, and our hearts were less vagrant than our fancies. This was in the old time, and when English girls were content to be what God and nature had made them. Of late years we have changed the pattern, and have given to the world a race of women as utterly unlike the old insular ideal as if we had created another nation altogether. The girl of the period, and the fair young English girl of the past, have nothing in common save ancestry and their mother-tongue: and even of this last the modern version makes almost a new language through the copious additions it has received from the current slang of the day.

The girl of the period is a creature who dyes her hair and paints her face, as the first articles of her personal religion; whose sole idea of life is plenty of fun and luxury; and whose dress is the object of such thought and intellect as she possesses. Her main endeavor in this is to outvie her neighbors in the extravagance of fashion. No matter whether, as in the time of crinolines, she sacrificed decency, or, as now in the time of trains, she sacrifices cleanliness; no matter either, whether she makes herself a nuisance and an inconvenience to every one she meets. [27]

The girl of the period has done away with such moral muffishness as consideration for others, or regard for counsel and rebuke. It was all very well in old-fashioned times, when fathers and mothers had some authority and were treated with respect, to be tutored and made to obey, but she is far too fast and flourishing to be stopped in mid-career by these slow old morals; and as she dresses to please herself, she does not care if she displeases every one else. Nothing is too extraordinary and nothing too exaggerated for her vitiated taste; and things which in themselves would be useful reforms if let alone become monstrosities worse than those which they have displaced so soon as she begins to manipulate and improve. If a sensible fashion lifts the gown out of the mud, she raises hers midway to her knee. If the absurd structure of wire and buckram, once called a bonnet, is modified to something that shall protect the wearer's face without putting out the eyes of her companion, she cuts hers down to four straws and a rosebud, or a tag of lace and a bunch of glass beads.

If there is a reaction against an excess of Rowland's Macassar, and hair shiny and sticky with grease is thought less nice than if left clean and healthy crisp, she dries and frizzes and sticks hers out on end like certain savages in Africa, or lets it wander down her back like Madge Wildfire's, and thinks herself all the more beautiful the nearer she approaches in look to a maniac [28]
or a negress. With purity of taste she has lost also that far more precious purity and delicacy of perception which sometimes mean more than appears on the surface. What the *demi-monde* does in its frantic efforts to excite attention, she also does in imitation. If some fashionable *dévergondée en evidence* is reported to have come out with her dress below her shoulder-blades, and a gold strap for all the sleeve thought necessary, the girl of the period follows suit next day; and then wonders that men sometimes mistake her for her prototype, or that mothers of girls not quite so far gone as herself refuse her as a companion for their daughters. She has blunted the fine edges of feeling so much that she cannot understand why she should be condemned for an imitation of form which does not include imitation of fact; she cannot be made to see that modesty of appearance and virtue ought to be inseparable, and that no good girl can afford to appear bad, under penalty of receiving the contempt awarded to the bad.

This imitation of the *demi-monde* in dress leads to something in manner and feeling, not quite so pronounced, perhaps, but far too like to be honorable to herself or satisfactory to her friends. It leads to slang, bold talk, and fastness; to the love of pleasure and indifference to duty; to the desire of money before either love or happiness; to uselessness at home, dissatisfaction with the monotony of ordinary life, and horror of all useful work; in a word, to the worst forms of luxury and selfishness, to the most fatal effects arising from want of high principle and absence of [29]
tender feeling.

The girl of the period envies the queens of the *demi-monde* far more than she abhors them. She sees them gorgeously attired and sumptuously appointed, and she knows them to be flattered, fêted, and courted with a certain disdainful admiration of which she catches only the admiration while she ignores the disdain. They have all for which her soul is hungering, and she never stops to reflect at what a price they have bought their gains, and what fearful moral penalties they pay for their sensuous pleasures. She sees only the coarse gilding on the base token, and shuts her eyes to the hideous figure in the midst, and the foul legend written around the edge.

It is this envy of the pleasures, and indifference to the sins, of these women of the *demi-monde* which is doing such infinite mischief to the modern girl. They brush too closely by each other, if not in actual deeds, yet in aims and feelings; for the luxury which is bought by vice with the one is the thing of all in life most passionately desired by the other, though she is not yet prepared to pay quite the same price. Unfortunately, she has already paid too much, all, indeed, that once gave her distinctive national character. No one can say of the modern English girl that she is tender, loving, retiring, or domestic. The old fault so often found by keen-sighted Frenchwomen, that, she was so fatally *romanesque*, so prone to sacrifice appearances and social advantages for love, will never be set down to the girl of the period. Love, indeed, is the last thing she thinks of, [30]
and the least of the dangers besetting her. Love in a cottage, that seductive dream which used to vex the heart and disturb the calculations of prudent mothers, is now a myth of past ages. The legal barter of herself for so much money, representing so much dash, so much luxury and pleasure; that is her idea of marriage; the only idea worth entertaining.

For all seriousness of thought respecting the duties or the consequences of marriage, she has not a trace. If children come, they find but a stepmother's cold welcome from her; and if her husband thinks that he has married anything that is to belong to him—a *tacens et placens uxor* pledged to make him happy—the sooner he wakes from his hallucination and understands that he has simply married some one who will condescend to spend his money on herself, and who will shelter her indiscretions behind the shield of his name, the less severe will be his disappointment. She has married his house, his carriage, his balance at the banker's, his title; and he himself is just the inevitable condition clogging the wheels of her fortune; at best an adjunct, to be tolerated with more or less patience as may chance. For it is only the old-fashioned sort, not girls of the period *pur sang*, that marry for love, or put the husband before the banker.

But she does not marry easily. Men are afraid of her; and with reason. They may amuse themselves with her for an evening, but they do not take her readily for life. Besides, after all her [31]
efforts, she is only a poor copy of the real thing; and the real thing is far more amusing than the copy, because it is real. Men can get that whenever they like; and when they go into their mother's drawing-rooms, to see their sisters and their sisters' friends, they want something of quite different flavor. *Toujours perdrix* is bad providing all the world over; but a continual weak imitation of *toujours perdrix* is worse. If we must have only one kind of thing, let us have it

genuine; and the queens of St. John's Wood in their unblushing honesty, rather than their imitators and make-believes in Bayswater and Belgravia. For, at whatever cost of shocked self-love or pained modesty it may be, it cannot be too plainly told to the modern English girl that the net result of her present manner of life is to assimilate her as nearly as possible to a class of women whom we must not call by their proper—or improper—name. And we are willing to believe that she has still some modesty of soul left hidden under all this effrontery of fashion, and that, if she could be made to see herself as she appears to the eyes of men, she would mend her ways before too late.

It is terribly significant of the present state of things when men are free to write as they do of the women of their own nation. Every word of censure flung against them is two-edged, and wounds those who condemn as much as those who are condemned; for surely it need hardly be said that men hold nothing so dear as the honor of their women, and that no one living would willingly [32] lower the repute of his mother or his sisters. It is only when these have placed themselves beyond the pale of masculine respect that such things could be written as are written now; when they become again what they were once they will gather round them the love and homage and chivalrous devotion which were then an Englishwoman's natural inheritance. The marvel, in the present fashion of life among women, is how it holds its ground in spite of the disapprobation of men. It used to be an old-time notion that the sexes were made for each other, and that it was only natural for them to please each other, and to set themselves out for that end. But the girl of the period does not please men. She pleases them as little as she elevates them; and how little she does that, the class of women she has taken as her models of itself testifies.

All men whose opinion is worth having prefer the simple and genuine girl of the past, with her tender little ways and pretty bashful modesties, to this loud and rampant modernization, with her false red hair and painted skin, talking slang as glibly as a man, and by preference leading the conversation to doubtful subjects. She thinks she is piquant and exciting when she thus makes herself the bad copy of a worse original; and she will not see that though men laugh with her they do not respect her, though they flirt with her they do not marry her; she will not believe that she is not the kind of thing they want, and that she is acting against nature and her own interests when she disregards their advice and offends their taste. We do not see how she makes out her [33] account, viewing her life from any side; but all we can do is to wait patiently until the national madness has passed, and our women have come back again to the old English ideal, once the most beautiful, the most modest, the most essentially womanly in the world.

FOOLISH VIRGINS. [34]

The heroines of the London season—the fillies, we mean, who have been entered for the great matrimonial stakes, and have been mentioned in the betting—have by this time exchanged the fast pleasures of the town for the vapid pastimes of the country. We do not of course concern ourselves with those poor simple girls who only repeat the lives and morals of old-fashioned English homes, and who are too respectable and too modest to be pointed at as the girls of the season. We speak of the fast sisterhood only. After three months of egregious dissipation they enter duly upon the next stage of their regular yearly alternations. Three months of headlong folly are succeeded by three months of deadly *ennui*. Action and reaction are always equal. The pains and weariness of moral crapulousness arise in nice proportion to the passion of the debauch. It is a dismal hour when we look on the withered leaves of last night's garland.

The lovely and unlovely beings who are now living depressed days far from Belgravia and the Row have, it is true, but joyless orgies to look back upon. Their pleasures gave but a pinchbeck joviality after all, were but a thin lacker spread over mercenary cares and heart-aching jealousies —not the jealousies of passion, but the nipping vulgar vexation with which a shopkeeper trembles [35] lest a customer should go to his rival over the way. Still there was excitement—the excitement of outdoing a rival in shamelessness of apparel, in reckless abandonment of manner, in the unblushing tolerance of impudent speech, in all the other elements of ignoble casino-emulation. Above all, there was the tickling excitement of knowing that all this was in some sort clandestine; that ostensibly, and on the surface, things looked as if they were all exhibiting human nature at its stateliest, most dignified, and most refined pitch. The consciousness that the thin surface only conceals some of the worst elements of character in full force and activity must give a pleasantly stinging sensation to an acutely cynical woman. However, this is all over for a time.

For a time the half-dressed young Mænads of the season will be found clothed and in their right minds. And what sort of a right mind is it? We know the kind of preparation which they have had for the business of the season—for flirting, husband-hunting, waltzing, dressing so as to escape the regulations of the police, and the rest. For this their training has been perfect. But wise men agree that education should comprehend training for all the parts of life equally—for pleasure not less than for business, for hours of relaxation as well as for hours of strain and pressure, for leisure just as much as for active occupation. Education is supposed to arm us at every point. Nobody in this world was ever perfectly educated. Everybody has at least one side on which he is [36] weak—one quarter where temptations are either not irresistible, or else are not recognised as alluring to what is wrong. But we all know that training, though never perfect, can make the difference between a decently right and happy life and a bad, corrupt half-life or no life. What does training do for the nimble-footed young beauties of the London ball-room? It makes them

nimble-footed, we admit. And what else?

The root-idea of the training of girls of the uppermost class in this country is perhaps the most absolutely shameless that ever existed anywhere out of Circassia or Georgia. It puts clean out of sight the notion that women are rational beings as well as animals, or that they are destined to be the companions of men who are, or ought to be, also something more than animals. It takes the mind into account only as an occasionally useful accident of body. The mind ought to be developed a little, and in such a way as to make the body more piquant and attractive. Like the candle inside a Chinese lantern, it may serve to light up and show to advantage the pretty devices outside. But the outside is the important thing, and the inside only incidental. Insipidity of mind is perhaps a trifle objectionable, because there are a few young men of property who dislike insipidity, and who therefore might be lost from the toils in consequence. It is a crotchet and an eccentricity in a man to desire a wife with a bright mind, but since there are such persons, it is just as well to pay a slight attention to the mind in odd moments when one is not [37] engaged upon the more urgent business of the body. You don't know what may happen, and it is possible that the most eligible *parti* of a season may dislike the idea of taking a female idiot to wife. Still it would be absurd to change the entire system of up-bringing for our girls merely because here and there a man has a distaste for a fool.

The majority of men are incapable of gauging power of intellect and fineness of character. But the veriest blockhead and simpleton who ever lounged in a doorway or lisped in Pall Mall can tell a fine woman when he sees her, and is probably able to find pleasure and hope in the spectacle. It is these blockheads and simpletons who thus set the mode. They fix the standard of fashionable female education. Education, or the astounding modern conception of it, means preparation of girls for the marriage market. If a girl does not get well married, it were better for her and for her mother also if she had never been born, or had been cast with a millstone round her neck into the sea. Whom she marries—whether a man old enough to be her father, whether a pattern of imbecility, whether a man of a notoriously debauched character—this matters not a jot. Only let him have money. This being the conception of marriage, and marriage being the aim of all sagacious up-bringing, as most men unhappily are more surely taken on their animal than on their rational side, it is perfectly natural that you should strive to bring up a worthy family of attractive young animals. And let us pause upon this.

If the idea which, even at its best, would be so deplorably imperfect, were rationally carried out, [38] still it would not be so absolutely pestilent and debasing as it is. Physical education, rightly practiced, is a fine and indispensable process in right living. If the system had for its end the rearing of really robust and healthy creatures, it would mean something. On the contrary, however, anybody who makes a tour through fashionable rooms in the season may see that, in a vast quantity of cases, the heroines of the night are just as sorrily off in bodily stamina as they are for intellectual ideas and interests. Here we again encounter the fundamental blunder, that it is only the outside about which we need concern ourselves. Let a woman be well dressed (or judiciously undressed), have bright eyes, a whitish skin, rounded outlines, and that suffices. All this a wise English mother will certainly secure, just as a wise Chinese woman will take care to have tiny feet, plucked eyebrows, and black finger-nails.

If you go into a nursery you will see the process already at work. The little girl, who would fain exercise her young limbs by manifold rude sprawlings and rushing hither and thither, and single combats with her brothers, is tricked out in ribbons and gay frocks, and bid sit still in solemn decorum. With every year of her growth this principle of attention to outside trickeries and fineries is more rigidly pursued. Less and less every year are the nerves and muscles, the restless activities of arms and legs, exercised and made to purvey new vigor to the life. The blood is allowed to grow stagnant. The life of the woman, even as mere animal, becomes poor and morbid [39] and artificial. By dint of much attention and many devices, the outside of the body is maintained comely in the eyes of people whose notions of comeliness are thoroughly artificial and sophisticated. But how can there be any health with high eating, little exercise, above all, with the mind left absolutely vacant of all interests? The Belgravian mother does not even understand the miserable trade she has chosen. She is as poor a physical trainer as she is poor morally and intellectually.

The truth is that in a human being, even from the physical point of view, it is rather a dangerous thing to ignore the intellect and the emotions. Nature resents being ignored. If you do not cultivate her, she will assuredly avenge herself. If you do not get wheat out of your piece of ground, she will abundantly give you tares. And there can be no other rule expressly invented for the benefit of fashionable young women. Their moral nature, if nobody ever taught them to keep an eager eye upon it, is soon overgrown, either with flaunting poison plants, or at best with dull gray moss. The parent dreams that the daughter's mind is all swept and garnished. Lo, there are seven or any other number of devils that have entered in and taken possession, more or less permanently. The human creature who has never been taught to take an interest in what is right and wholesome will, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, take an interest in what is wrong and unwholesome. You cannot keep minds in a state of vacuum. A girl, like anybody else, will obey [40] the bent of the character which has been given either by the education of design or the more usual education of mere accidental experience. Everything depends, in the ordinary course of things, upon the general view of the aims and objects of life which you succeed, deliberately or by hazard, in creating.

A girl is not taught that marriage has grave, moral and rational purposes, itself being no more than a means. On the contrary, it is always figured in her eyes as an end, and as an end scarcely

at all connected with a moral and rational companionship. It is, she fancies, the gate to some sort of paradise whose mysterious joys are not to be analysed. She forgets that there are no such swift-coming spontaneous paradises in this world, where the future can never be anything more than the child of the present, indelibly stamped with every feature and line of its parent. This castle-building, however, is harmless. If it does not strengthen, still it does not absolutely impoverish or corrupt, characters. Of some castle-building one cannot say so much. Character *is* assuredly corrupted by avaricious dreams of marriage as a road to material opulence and luxury. There is, indeed, no end to the depraved broodings which may come to an empty and undirected mind. If the emotions and the intellect are not tended and trained, they will run to an evil and evil-propagating seed. Rooted and incurable frivolty is the best that can come of it; corruption is the worst.

People madly suppose that going to church, or giving an occasional blanket to a sick old woman, [41] will suffice to implant a worthy conception of the aims of life. At this moment, some mothers are, perhaps, believing that the dull virtue of the country will in a few days redress the balance which had been too much discomposed by the rush and whirl of the town. As if one strong set of silly interests and emotions could be effaced at will by simple change of scene, without substitution of new interests and emotions. Excess of frivolous excitement is not repaired or undone by excess of mere blankness and nothingness. The dreariness of the virtue of the *villeggiatura* is as noxious as the whirl of the mercenary and little virtuous period of the season. Teach young women from their childhood upwards that marriage is their single career, and it is inevitable that they should look upon every hour which is not spent in promoting this sublime end and aim as so much subtracted from life. Penetrated with unwholesome excitement in one part of their existence, they are penetrated with killing *ennui* in the next.

If mothers would only add to their account of marriage as the end of a woman's existence—which may be right or it may not—a definition of marriage as an association with a reasonable and reflective being, they would speedily effect a revolution in the present miserable system. To the business of finding a husband a young lady would then add the not less important business of making herself a rational person, instead of a more or less tastefully decorated doll with a [42] passion for a great deal of money. She might awaken to the fact, which would at first startle her very much no doubt, that there is a great portion of a universe outside her own circle and her own mind. This simple discovery would of itself effect a revolution that might transform her from being an insipid idiot into a tolerably rational being. As it is, the universe to her is only a collection of rich bachelors in search of wives, and of odious rivals who are contending with her for one or more of these too wary prizes. All high social aims, fine broad humanizing ways of surveying life, are unknown to her, or else appear in her eyes as the worship of Mumbo Jumbo appears in the eyes of the philosopher. She thinks of nothing except her private affairs. She is indifferent to politics, to literature—in a word, to anything that requires thought. She reads novels of a kind, because novels are all about love, and love had once something to do with marriage, her own peculiar and absorbing business. Beyond this her mind does not stir. Any more positively gross state one cannot imagine. There are women who are by accident more degraded physically. *Mutatis mutandis*, there are none more degraded, morally and intellectually, than those whose minds are constantly bent upon marriage at any cost, and with anybody, however decrepit, however silly, and however evil, who can make a settlement.

LITTLE WOMEN. [43]

The conventional idea of a brave, an energetic, or a supremely criminal woman is a tall, dark-haired, large-armed virago, who might pass as the younger brother of her husband, and about whom nature seemed to have hesitated before determining whether to make her a man or a woman—a kind of debatable land, in fact, between the two sexes, and almost as much one as the other. Helen Macgregor, Lady Macbeth, Catharine de' Medici, Mrs. Manning, and the old-fashioned murderesses in novels, are all of the muscular, black-brigand type, with more or less of regal grace superadded according to circumstances; and it would be thought nothing but a puerile fancy to suppose the contrary of those whose personal description is not already known. Crime, indeed, especially in art and fiction, has generally been painted in very nice proportion to the number of cubic inches embodied, and the depth of color employed; though we are bound to add that the public favor runs towards muscular heroines almost as much as towards muscular murderesses, which to a certain extent redresses the overweighted balance.

Our later novelists, however, have altered the whole setting of the palette. Instead of five foot ten of black and brown, they have gone in for four foot nothing of pink and yellow; instead of tumbled [44] masses of raven hair, they have shining coils of purest gold; instead of hollow caverns whence flash unfathomable eyes eloquent of every damnable passion, they have limpid lakes of heavenly blue; and their worst sinners are in all respects fashioned as much after the outward semblance of the ideal saint as can well be managed. The original notion was a very good one, and the revolution did not come before it was wanted; but it has been a little overdone of late, and we are threatened with as great a surfeit of small-limbed, yellow-headed criminals as we have had of the man-like black. One gets weary of the most perfect model in time, if too constantly repeated; as now, when we have all begun to feel that the resources of the angel's face and demon's soul have been more heavily drawn on than is quite fair, and that, given "heavy braids of golden hair," "bewildering blue eyes," "a small lithe frame," "a special delicacy of feet and hands," and we are

booked for the companionship, through three volumes, of a young person to whom Messalina or Lucretia Borgia would be a mere novice.

And yet there is a physiological truth in this association of energy with smallness; perhaps, also, with a certain tint of yellow hair, which, with a dash of red through it, is decidedly suggestive of nervous force. Suggestiveness, indeed, does not go very far in an argument; but the frequent connection of energy and smallness in women is a thing which all may verify in their own circles. [45] In daily life, who is the really formidable woman to encounter?—the black-browed, broad-shouldered giantess, with arms almost as big in the girth as a man's? or the pert, smart, trim little female, with no more biceps than a ladybird, and of just about equal strength with a sparrow? Nine times out of ten, the giantess with the heavy shoulders and broad black eyebrows is a timid, feeble-minded, good tempered person, incapable of anything harsher than a mild remonstrance with her maid, or a gentle chastisement of her children. Nine times out of ten her husband has her in hand in the most perfect working order, so that she would swear the moon shone at midday if it were his pleasure that she should make a fool of herself in that direction. One of the most obedient and indolent of earth's daughters, she gives no trouble to any one, save the trouble of rousing, exciting, and setting her agoing; while, as for the conception or execution of any naughty piece of self-assertion, she is as utterly incapable as if she were a child unborn, and demands nothing better than to feel the pressure of the leading-strings, and to know exactly by their strain where she is desired to go and what to do.

But the little woman is irrepressible. Too fragile to come into the fighting section of humanity, a puny creature whom one blow from a man's huge fist could annihilate, absolutely fearless, and insolent with the insolence which only those dare show who know that retribution cannot follow—what can be done with her? She is afraid of nothing, and to be controlled by no one. Sheltered [46] behind her weakness as behind a triple shield of brass, the angriest man dare not touch her, while she provokes him to a combat in which his hands are tied. She gets her own way in everything, and everywhere. At home and abroad she is equally dominant and irrepressible, equally free from obedience and from fear. Who breaks all the public orders in sights and shows, and, in spite of king, kaiser, or policeman X, goes where it is expressly forbidden that she shall go? Not the large-boned, muscular woman, whatever her temperament; unless, indeed, of the exceptionally haughty type in distinctly inferior surroundings, and then she can queen it royally enough, and set everything at most lordly defiance. But in general the large-boned woman obeys the orders given, because, while near enough to man to be somewhat on a par with him, she is still undeniably his inferior. She is too strong to shelter herself behind her weakness, yet too weak to assert her strength and defy her master on equal grounds. She is like a flying-fish, not one thing wholly; and while capable of the inconveniences of two lives, is incapable of the privileges of either.

It is not she, for all her well-developed frame and formidable looks, but the little woman, who breaks the whole code of laws and defies all their defenders—the pert, smart, pretty little woman, who laughs in your face, and goes straight ahead if you try to turn her to the right hand or to the left, receiving your remonstrances with the most sublime indifference, as if you were talking a foreign language she could not understand. She carries everything before her, wherever she is. [47] You may see her stepping over barriers, slipping under ropes, penetrating to the green benches with a red ticket, taking the best places on the platform over the heads of their rightful owners, settling herself among the reserved seats without an inch of pasteboard to float her. You cannot turn her out by main force. British chivalry objects to the public laying on of hands in the case of a woman, even when most recalcitrant and disobedient; more particularly if a small and fragile-looking woman. So that, if it is only a usurpation of places especially masculine, she is allowed to retain what she has got amid the grave looks of the elders—not really displeased though at a flutter of her ribbons among them—and the titters and nudges of the young fellows.

If the battle is between her and another woman, they are left to fight it out as they best can, with the odds laid heavily on the little one. All this time there is nothing of the tumult of contest about her. Fiery and combative as she generally is, when breaking the law in public places she is the very soul of serene daring. She shows no heat, no passion, no turbulence; she leaves these as extra weapons of defence to women who are assailable. For herself she requires no such aids. She knows her capabilities and the line of attack that best suits her, and she knows, too, that the fewer points of contact she exposes the more likely she is to slip into victory; the more she assumes, and the less she argues, the slighter the hold she gives her opponents. She is either [48] perfectly good-humored or blankly innocent; she either smiles you into indulgence or wearies you into compliance by the sheer hopelessness of making any impression on her. She may, indeed, if of the very vociferous and shrill-tongued kind, burst out into such a noisy demonstration that you are glad to escape from her, no matter what spoils you leave on her hands; just as a mastiff will slink away from a bantam hen all heckled feathers and screeching cackle, and tremendous assumption of doing something terrible if he does not look out. Any way the little woman is unconquerable; and a tiny fragment of humanity at a public show, setting all rules and regulations at defiance, is only carrying out in the matter of benches the manner of life to which nature has dedicated her from the beginning.

As a rule, the little woman is brave. When the lymphatic giantess falls into a faint or goes off into hysterics, she storms, or bustles about, or holds on like a game terrier, according to the work on hand. She will fly at any man who annoys her, and bears herself as equal to the biggest and strongest fellow of her acquaintance. In general she does it all by sheer pluck, and is not notorious for subtlety or craft. Had Delilah been a little woman she would never have taken the

trouble to shear Samson's locks. She would have defied him with all his strength untouched on his head, and she would have overcome him too. Judith and Jael were both probably large women. The work they went about demanded a certain strength of muscle and toughness of [49] sinew; but who can say that Jezebel was not a small, freckled, auburn-haired Lady Audley of her time, full of the concentrated fire, the electric force, the passionate recklessness of her type? Regan and Goneril might have been beautiful demons of the same pattern; we have the example of the Marchioness de Brinvilliers as to what amount of spiritual deviltry can exist with the face and manner of an angel direct from heaven; and perhaps Cordelia was a tall dark-haired girl, with a pair of brown eyes, and a long nose sloping downwards.

Look at modern Jewesses, with their flashing Oriental orbs, their night-black tresses, and the dusky shadows of their olive-colored complexions; as catalogued properties according to the ideal, they would be placed in the list of the natural criminals and lawbreakers, while in reality they are about as meek and docile a set of women as are to be found within the four seas. Pit a fiery little Welsh woman or a petulant Parisienne against the most regal and Junonic amongst them, and let them try conclusions in courage, in energy, or in audacity; the Israelitish Juno will go down before either of the small Philistines, and the fallacy of weight and color in the generation of power will be shown without the possibility of denial. Even in those old days of long ago, when human characteristics were embodied and deified, we do not find that the white-armed, large-limbed Hērē, though queen by right of marriage, lorded it over her sister goddesses by any superior energy or force of nature. On the contrary, she was rather a heavy-going person, [50] and, unless moved to anger by her husband's numerous infidelities, took her Olympian life placidly enough, and once or twice got cheated in a way that did no great credit to her sagacity. A little Frenchwoman would have sailed around her easily; and as it was, shrewish though she was in her speech when provoked, her husband not only deceived but chastised her, and reduced her to penitence and obedience as no little woman would have suffered herself to be reduced.

There is one celebrated race of women who were probably the powerfully-built, large-limbed creatures they are assumed to have been, and as brave and energetic as they were strong and big—the Norse women of the sagas, who, for good or evil, seem to have been a very influential element in the old Northern life. Prophetesses, physicians, dreamers of dreams and the accredited interpreters as well, endowed with magic powers, admitted to a share in the councils of men, brave in war, active in peace, these fair-haired Scandinavian women were the fit comrades of their men, the fit wives and mothers of the Berserkers and the Vikings. They had no tame or easy life of it, if all we hear of them is true. To defend the farm and the homestead during their husbands' absence, and to keep themselves intact against all bold rovers to whom the Tenth Commandment was an unknown law; to dazzle and bewilder by magic arts when they could not conquer by open strength; to unite craft and courage, deception and daring, loyalty and [51] independence, demanded no small amount of opposing qualities. But the Steingerdas and Gudrunas were generally equal to any emergency of fate or fortune, and slashed their way through the history of their time more after the manner of men than women; supplementing their downright blows by side thrusts of craftier cleverness when they had to meet power with skill, and were fain to overthrow brutality by fraud. The Norse women were certainly as largely framed as they were mentally energetic, and as crafty as either; but we know of no other women who unite the same characteristics, and are at once cunning, strong, brave and true.

On the whole, then, the little women have the best of it. More petted than their bigger sisters, and infinitely more powerful, they have their own way in part because it really does not seem worth while to contest a point with such little creatures. There is nothing that wounds a man's self-respect in any victory they may get or claim. Where there is absolute inequality of strength, there can be no humiliation in the self-imposed defeat of the stronger; and as it is always more pleasant to have peace than war, and as big men for the most part rather like than not to put their necks under the tread of tiny feet, the little woman goes on her way triumphant to the end, breaking all the laws she does not like, and throwing down all the barriers that impede her progress, perfectly irresistible and irrepressible in all circumstances and under any condition.

PINCHBECK. [52]

Not many years ago no really refined gentlewoman would have worn pinchbeck. False jewelry and imitation lace were touchstones with the sex, and the woman who would condescend to either was assumed, perhaps not quite without reason, to have lost something more than the mere perception of technical taste. This feeling ran through the whole of society, and pinchbeck was considered as at once despicable and disreputable. The successful speculator, sprung from nothing, who had made his fortune during the war, might buy land, build himself a mansion, and set up a magnificent establishment, but he was never looked on as more than a lucky adventurer by the aboriginal gentry of the place; and the blue blood, perhaps nourishing itself on thin beer, turned up its nose disdainfully at the claret and madeira which had been personally earned and not lineally inherited. This exclusiveness was narrow in spirit, and hard in individual working; and yet there was a wholesome sentiment underlying its pride which made it valuable in social ethics, if immoral on the score of natural equality and human charity. It was the rejection of pretentiousness, however gilded and glittering, in favor of reality, however poor and barren; it [53] was the condemnation of make-believes—the repudiation of pinchbeck. It is not a generation since this was the normal attitude of society towards its *nouveaux riches* and Brummagem

jewelry; but time moves fast in these later days, and national sentiments change as quickly as national fashions.

We are in the humor to rehabilitate all things, and pinchbeck has now its turn with the rest. The lady of slender means who would refuse to wear imitation lace and false jewelry is as rare as the country society which would exclude the *nouveau riche* because of his newness, and not adopt him because of his riches. The whole anxiety now is, not what a thing is, but how it looks—not its quality, but its appearance. Every part of social and domestic life is dedicated to the apotheosis of pinchbeck. It meets us at the hall door, where miserable make-believes of stuccoed pillars are supposed to confer a quasi-palatial dignity on a wretched little villa, run up without regard to one essential of home comfort or of architectural truth. It goes with us into the cold, conventional drawing-room, where all is for show, nothing for use, where no one lives, and which is just the mere pretence of a dwelling-room, set out to deceive the world into the belief that its cheap finery is the expression of the every-day life and circumstances of the family. It sits with us at the table, which a confectioner out of a back street has furnished, and where everything, down to the very flowers, is hired for the occasion. It glitters in the brooches and bracelets of the women, in the studs and signet-rings of the men; it is in the hired broughams, the hired waiters, the pigmy [54]
page-boys, the faded paper flowers, the cheap champagne, and the affectation of social consideration that meet us at every turn. The whole of the lower section of the middle classes is penetrated through and through with the worship of pinchbeck, and for one family that holds itself in the honor and simplicity of truth, ten thousand lie, to the world and to themselves, in frippery and pretence.

The greatest sinners in this are women. Men are often ostentatious, often extravagant, and not unfrequently dishonest in that broadway of dishonesty which is called living beyond their means —sometimes making up the deficit by practices which end in the dock of the Old Bailey; but, as a rule, they go in for the real thing in details, and their pinchbeck is at the core rather than on the surface. Women, on the contrary, give themselves up to a more general pretentiousness, and, provided they can make a show, care very little about the means; provided they can ring their metal on the counter, they ignore the want of the hall-stamp underneath. Locality, dress, their visiting-list, and domestic appearances are the four things which they demand shall be in accord with their neighbor's; and for these four surfaces they will sacrifice the whole internal fabric. They will have a showy-looking house, encrusted with base ornamentation and false grandeur, though it lets in wind, rain, and sound almost as if it were made of mud or canvas, rather than a plain and substantial dwelling-place, with comfort instead of stucco, and moderately thick walls [55]
instead of porches and pilasters. Most of their time is necessarily passed at home, but they undergo all manner of house discomfort resulting from this preference of cheap finery over solid structure, rather than forego their "genteel locality" and stereotyped ornamentation. A family of daughters on the one side, diligent over the "Battle of Prague;" a nursery full of crying babies on the other; more Battles of Prague opposite, diversified by a future Lind practicing her scales unweariedly; water-pipes bursting in the frost, walls streaming in the thaw, the lower offices reeking and green with damp, and the upper rooms too insecure for unrestricted movement—all these, and more miseries of the same kind, she willingly encounters rather than shift into a locality relatively unfashionable to her sphere, but where she could have substantiality and comfort for the same rent that she pays now for flash and pinchbeck.

In dress it is the same thing. She must look like her neighbors, no matter whether they can spend pounds to her shillings, and run up a milliner's bill beyond what she can afford for the whole family living. If they can buy gold, she can manage pinchbeck; glass that looks like jet, like filagree work, like anything else she fancies, is every bit to her as good as the real thing; and if she cannot compass Valenciennes and Mechlin, she can go to Nottingham and buy machine-made imitations that will make quite as fine a show. How poor soever she may be, she must hang herself about with ornaments made of painted wood, glass, or vulcanite; she must break out into spangles and beads and chains and *benoîtons*, which are cheap luxuries, and, as she thinks, [56]
effective. Flimsy silks make as rich a rustle to her ear as the stateliest brocade, and cotton-velvet delights the soul that cannot aspire to Genoa. The love of pinchbeck is so deeply ingrained in her that even if, in a momentary fit of aberration into good taste, she condescends to a simple material about which there can be neither disguise nor pretence, she must load it with that detestable cheap finery of hers till she makes herself as vulgar in a muslin as she was in a cotton velvet.

The *simplex munditiis*, which used to be held as a canon of feminine good taste, is now abandoned altogether, and the more she can bedizen herself according to the pattern of a Sandwich islander the more beautiful she thinks herself, the more certain the fascination of the men, and the greater the jealousy of the women. This is the cause of all the tags and streamers, the bits of ribbon here and flying ends of laces there, the puffed-out chignons, and the trailing curls cut off some dead girl's head, wherewith the modern Englishwoman delights to make herself hideous. It is pinchbeck throughout. But we fear she is past praying for in the matter of fashion, and that she is too far given over to the abomination of pretence to be called back to truth for any ethical reason whatsoever, or indeed by anything short of high examples. And then, if simplicity became the fashion, we should have our pinchbeck votaries translating that into extremes as they do now with ornamentation; if my lady took to plainness, they would go to [57]
nakedness.

Another bit of pinchbeck is the visiting-list—the cards of invitation stuck against the drawing-room glass—with the grandest names and largest fortunes put forward, irrespective of dates or

tenses. The chance contact with the people represented may be quite out of the ordinary circumstances of life, but their names are paraded as if an accident, which has happened once and may never occur again, were in the daily order of events. They are brought to the front to make others believe that the whole social thickness is of the same quality; that generals and admirals and sirs and ladies are the common elements of the special circle in which the family habitually moves; that pinchbeck is good gold, and that stucco means marble. Women are exceedingly tenacious of these pasteboard appearances.

In a house with its couple of female servants, where formal visitors are very rare, and invitations, save by friendly word of mouth, rarer still, you may see a cracked china bowl or cheap mock *patera* on the hall table, to receive the cards which are assumed to come in the thick showers usual with high people who have hall-porters, and a thousand names or more on their books. The pile gets horribly dusty to be sure, and the upper layer turns by degrees from cream-color to brown; but antiquity is not held to weaken the force of grandeur. The titled card left on a chance occasion more than a year ago still keeps the uppermost place, still represents a perpetual renewal of aristocratic visits, and an unbroken succession of social triumphs. Yellowed and [58]
soiled, it is none the less the trump-card of the list; and while the outside world laughs and ridicules, the lady at home thinks that no one sees through this puerile pretence, and that the visiting-list is accepted according to the status of the fugleman at the head. She is very happy if she can say that the pattern of her dress, her cap, her bonnet, was taken from that of Lady So and So; and we may be quite sure that all personal contact with grand folks does so express itself, and perpetuate the memory of the event, by such imitation—at a distance. It is too good an occasion for the airing of pinchbeck to be disregarded, and, consequently, for the most part is turned to this practical account. Whether the fashion will be suited to the material, or to the other parts of the dress, is quite a secondary consideration, it being of the essence of pinchbeck to despise both fitness and harmony.

There is a large amount of pinchbeck in the appearance of social influence, much cultivated by women of a certain activity of mind, and with more definite aims than all women have. This belongs to a grade one step higher than the small pretences we have been speaking of—to women who have money, and so far have one reality, but who have not, by their own birth or their husband's, the original standing which would give them this influence as of right. Some make themselves notorious for their drawing-room patronage of artists, which, however, does not often include buying their pictures; others gather around them scores of obscure authors, whose [59]
books they talk of, if they do not read; a few, a short time since, were centres of spiritualistic circles, and got a queer kind of social influence thereby, so far as Philistine desire to witness the "manifestations" went; and one or two are names of weight in the emancipated ranks, and take chiefly to what they call "working women." These are they who attend Ladies' Committees, where they talk bosh, and pound away at utterly uninteresting subjects, as diligently as if what they said had any point in it, and what they did any ultimate issue in probability or common sense. But beyond the fact of having a large house, where their several sets may assemble at stated periods, these would-be lady patronesses are utterly impotent to help or hinder; and their patronage is just so much pinchbeck, not worth the trouble of weighing.

In all this gaudy attempt at show, this restless dissatisfaction with what they are, and ceaseless endeavour to appear something they are not, our middle-class ladies are doing themselves and society infinite mischief. They set the tone to the world below them, and the small tradespeople and the servants, when they copy the vices of their superiors, do not imitate her grace the duchess, but the doctor's wife over the way, and the lawyer's lady next door, and the young ladies everywhere, who all try to appear women of rank and fortune, and who are ashamed of nothing as much as of industry, truth and simplicity. Hence the rage for cheap finery in the kitchen, just a trifle more ugly and debased than that worn in the drawing-room; hence the miserable [60]
pretentiousness, and pinchbeck fine-ladyism, filtering like poison through every pore of our society, to result God only knows in what grave moral cataclysm, unless women of mind and education will come to the front, and endeavour to stay the plague already begun.

Chains and brooches may seem but small material causes for important moral effects, but they are symbols; and, as symbols, of deep national value. No good will be done till we get back some of our fine old horror of pinchbeck, and once more insist on truth as the foundation of our national life. Education and refinement will be of no avail if they do not land us here; and the progress of the arts and society must not be brought to mean chiefly the travesty of civilized ladies into the semblance of savages, by the cheap imitation of costly substances. Women are always rushing about the world eager after everything but their home business. Here is something for them to do—the regeneration of society by means of their own energies; the bringing people back to the dignity of truth and the beauty of simplicity; and the substitution of that self-respect which is content to appear what it is, for the feeble pride which revels in pinchbeck because it cannot get gold, and which endeavors so hard to hide its real estate, and to pass for what it is not and never could be.

PUSHING WOMEN. [61]

The achievements of Anglo-Saxon energy present a rich mine of material to the bookmaker. We are justly proud of our self-made men—of our Chancellors who have risen from the barber's-shop

to the Woolsack, of our low-born inventors who have fought their way to scientific recognition, of our merchant princes who have begun life with a capital of one half-crown. The story of the man who has raised himself to eminence by his own exertions, in the face of overwhelming disadvantages and obstacles, is a thrice-told tale, thanks to Mr. Smiles and other biographers. But our admiration has been almost exclusively drawn to these signal examples of pushing *men*. The analogous exploits of the fair sex remain comparatively unchronicled. No one has hitherto published a book about Self-made Women. Yet this branch of the subject would be very interesting, and even instructive. Of course the opportunity for the display of energy in pushing is, in the case of woman, much more limited. She cannot push at the Bar or in the Church, or in business. Her sphere for pushing is practically narrowed down to one department of human life—society. But within the limits of that sphere she exhibits very remarkable proofs of this peculiar [62] form of activity. Moreover, pushing is a feature so peculiarly characteristic of the English, as distinct from the Continental *salon*, that no attempt to place a picture of the Englishwoman in her totality before her foreign critics would be complete without it.

There are three periods in the career of a pushing woman. The first is that in which she emerges from obscurity, or, worse perhaps, from the notoriety of commercial antecedents, and carried, by a vigorous push, the outworks of fashionable society. The wife of a successful speculator in cotton or guano, who is also the mistress of a comfortable mansion in Bloomsbury, gradually becomes restless and dissatisfied with her surroundings. It would be curious to trace the growth of this discontent. Ambition is deeply rooted in the female bosom. Even housemaids are actuated by an impulse to better themselves, and village school-mistresses yearn for a larger sphere. Perhaps it is this instinct to rise, so creditable to the sex, which compels a lady with a long purse, and a name well known in the city, to enter the lists as an aspirant to fashion. Perhaps her career is developed by a more gradual process. Climbing social Alps is like climbing material Alps—for a time the intervening heights shut out from view the grander peaks. It is not till one has topped Peckham or Hackney that a more extended horizon bursts on the eye, and one catches sight of the glittering summits of Belgravia. Account for it as we may, the phenomenon of a woman in the enjoyment of every comfort and luxury that wealth can give, but ready to barter it all for a few [63] crumbs of contemptuous notice from persons of rank, is by no means uncommon. Probably the fashionable newspaper is a great stimulus to pushing.

The rich vulgarian pores over *Court Circulars* and catalogues of aristocratic names till the fascination becomes irresistible, and the desire to see her own name, purged of cotton or guano, figuring in the same sheet grows to a monomania. But how is this to be done? Fortunately for the purpose which she has in view, there exist in these latter days amphibious beings, half trader, half fop, with one set of relations with the world of commerce and another set of relations with the world of fashion. The dandy, driven into the city by the stress of his fiscal exigencies, forms a link between the East-end and the West. Among his other functions is that of giving aid and counsel, not exactly gratis, to any fair outsider who wants to "get into" society. For every applicant he has but one bit of advice. She must spend money.

For a woman who is neither clever nor beautiful nor high-born, there is but one way to proceed. She must bribe right and left. No rotten borough absorbs more cash than the fashionable world. Its recognition is merely a question of money. All its distinctions have their price. It exacts from the pushing woman a thumping entrance-fee in the shape of a sumptuous concert or ball. Nor is it only the first push which costs. Every subsequent advance is as much a matter of purchase as a step in the army.

There is a tariff of its honors, and any Belgravian actuary can calculate to a nicety the price of a [64] stare from a great lady, or a card from a leader of fashion. This is the philosophy expounded by the amphibious dandy to his civic pupil. The upshot is, that she must give an entertainment, or a series of entertainments, on a scale of great splendor. Of course the house in Bloomsbury must be exchanged for another in a fashionable quarter. A more profuse style of living must be adopted. Her equipages must be gorgeous, her flunkeys numerous and well powdered. Above all, she must at once and for ever make a clean sweep of all her old friends. Upon these conditions, and in consideration of a *douceur* for himself, he agrees to be her friend, and help her to push. Then follows a delicate negotiation with one of those dowagers who rather pique themselves on their good nature in standing sponsors to pushing nobodies. She, too, makes her conditions. For the sake of the elderly pet to whom she is indebted for her daily supply of scandal, she consents to countenance his *protegée*. But she declines to ask her to her own house. She will dine with her, provided the dinner is exquisite, and two or three of her own cronies are included in the invitation. Last and crowning condescension, she will ask the company for the proposed concert or ball, provided the thing is done regardless of expense. It would be hard to say which a cynic would think most charming—the readiness to accept, or the inclination to impose, such conditions.

At last the great occasion arrives. Planted at the top of her staircase, under the wing of her fashionable allies, the nominal giver of the entertainment is duly stared at and glared at by a [65] supercilious crowd, who examine her with the same sort of languid interest which they devote to a new animal at the Zoological. The greater number are "going on" to another party. But the next morning brings balm for every mortification. Her ball is blazoned in the fashionable journals, and the well-bred reporter, while elaborately complimentary to the exotics, is discreetly silent as to the supercilious stares. She does not exactly awake to find herself famous, but at least she is no longer outside the Pale. At a considerable outlay, she has got into what a connoisseur in shades of fashion would call tenth-rate society. This is not much; still, it is a beginning, and a beginning

is everything to a pushing woman.

In the pushing woman of the transition period we behold a lady who has got a certain footing in society, but who is straining every nerve, in season and out of season, by hook and by crook, to improve her position. Society within the Pale is divided into a great many "zones" or "sets." It is like a target, with outer, middle, inner, and innermost circles. The exterior circle, corresponding to "the black" in archery, consists of persona, for the most part, with limited means and moderate ambition. People who try to combine fashion with economy stick here, and advance no further. Carpet-dances and champagneless suppers are typical of this circle. Here mothers and daughters prey upon the inexperienced youth of the Universities and green young officers, who are deluded for one season by their pretensions to fashion, but who cut them the next. Here, too, may be [66] found persons whose social progress has been retarded by foolish scruples about cutting their old friends. Between this band of prowlers upon the outskirts of fashion and "the best set"—the golden ring in the centre of the shield—are many intermediate circles, each representing a different stage of distinction and exclusiveness. It is the multiplicity of these invisible lines of demarcation which makes pushing so laborious.

The world of fashion is not one homogeneous camp, but it is parcelled out into a number of cliques and coteries. Into one after another of these a pushing woman effects her entrance. She is always edging her way into a new and better set. At every step there are obstacles to be encountered, rivals to be jostled, fierce snubs to be endured. There is something almost sublime in the spectacle of this untiring activity of shoulder and elbow. The mere shoving—*vis consilî expers*—would never bring her near to her goal. An adept in the art of pushing does not rely on sheer impudence alone. She has recourse to artificial aids and appliances. A great deal of ingenuity is exhibited in the selection of her self-propelling machinery. It is a good plan to acquire a name for some one social speciality.

Private theatricals, for instance, or similar entertainments, may be turned to excellent account. Exhibitions of this kind pique curiosity, and people who come to stare remain to supper, and possibly return to drop a card on the following afternoon. But, if you go in for this sort of thing, [67] you must resign yourself to certain inconveniences. Your pretty drawing-room will be like Park Lane in a state of chronic obstruction. The carpenter's work will interfere somewhat with your comfort, and it is tiresome to be perpetually unhinging your doors and pulling your windows out of their frames. The jealousies and bickerings among the performers are another source of vexation. Miss A. declines to sit as Rowena to Miss B.'s Rebecca; and the drawing-room Roscius invariably objects to the part for which he is cast. Altogether, unless you have a positive taste for carpentry and green-room squabbles, it is better to steer clear of private theatricals.

Then there is the musical dodge. In skillful hands there is no better leverage for pushing operations than drawing-room music. Every one knows Lady Tweedledum and her amateur concerts. The fuss she makes about them is prodigious. They are a cheap sort of entertainment, but they cost the thrifty patroness of art a vast deal of trouble. She is always organizing practices, arranging rehearsals, drawing up programmes, or scouring London for musical recruits. She has been known to invade dingy Government offices for a tenor, and to run a soprano to earth in distant Bloomsbury. After all, her "music" is only so-so. You may hear better any night at Even's or the Oxford. One has heard "Dal tuo stellato soglio" before, and Niedermeyer insipidities are a little *fadé*. Sometimes, to complete the imposture, the names of Mendelssohn and Mozart are invoked, and, under cover of doing honor to an immortal composer, [68] a chorus of young people assemble for periodical flirtation. On the whole, it is wise not to attempt too much. Miss Quaver, with her staccato notes and semi-professional *minauderies*, is not exactly a queen of song. Nor does it give one any exquisite delight to hear Sir Raucisonous Trombone give tongue in a French romance. The talented band of the Piccadilly Troubadours, floundering through the overture to *Zampa*, hardly satisfies a refined musical ear. But, however indifferent in a musical point of view, from the point of view of the fair projector the thing is a success. It serves as a trap to catch duchesses, a device for putting salt on the tails of the popinjays of fashion. One fine day Lady Tweedledum's pretended zeal for music receives its crowning reward. The noise of it reaches august ears. An act of gracious condescension follows. Her Ladyship has the supreme delight of leading a scion of Royalty to a chair of state in her drawing-room, to hear Sir Raucisonous bleat and Miss Quaver trill.

There are subtler means of pushing than amateur concerts and private theatricals. There is the push vertical, as in the case of the commercial lady; and there is also the push lateral. A good example of the latter style of operation is afforded by the dowager who is fortunate enough to have an eldest son to use as a pushing machine. Handled with tact, a young heir, not yet cut adrift from the maternal apron-string, may be turned to excellent account. There is, or was, a sentimental ballad entitled, "I'll kiss him for his mother." One might reverse the sentiment in the [69] case of *Madame Mère*. Of her the dowagers with daughters to marry sing in chorus, "I'll visit her for her son." Civility to the mother is access to the son. A sharp tactician sees her advantage, and works the precious relationship for her own private ends. It is a mine of invitations of an eligible kind. By aid of it she springs over barriers which it would otherwise take her years to surmount, and is lifted into circles which by their unassisted efforts she and her daughters would never reach. Scheming dowagers are glad to have her at their balls when there is a chance of young Hopeful following in her train, and her five o'clock tea is delightful when there is a young millionaire to sip it with. Deprived of her decoy duck she would soon lose ground, and be left to push her way in society with uncomfortably reduced momentum.

Another capital instrument for pushing is a country-house. The mistress of a fine old hall and a

cypher of a husband is apt to take a peculiar view of the duties of property. One might expect her to be content with so dignified and enviable a lot, and to pass tranquil days in coddling the cottagers, patronizing the rector's wife, and impressing her crotchet on the national school. But no—she is bitten with the tarantula of social success. She wants to "get on" in society. She must push as vigorously as any trumpery adventuress in May Fair. A good old name is dragged into the dirt inseparable from pushing. The family portraits look disdainfully from their frames, and the [70] ancestral oaks hang their heads in shame. The company reflects the peculiar ambition of the hostess. The neighboring squires are conspicuous by their absence. The local small fry are of course ignored, though to the great lady of the county, who cuts her in town, she is cringingly obsequious. The visitors consist mainly of relays of youths, fast, foolish, and fashionable, with now and then a stray politician or journalist thrown in to give the party a *soupçon* of intellect. The principle of invitation is very simple. No one is asked who will not be of use in town. Any brainless little fop, any effete dandy, is sure of a welcome, provided he is known to certain circles and can help her to scramble into a little more vogue.

One more instance of lateral pushing. A connection with literature may be very effectively worked. The wives of poets, novelists, and historians have great facilities for pushing if they care to use them. Even the sleek parasite who fattens on a literature which he has done nothing to adorn, and conceals his emptiness under the airs of Sir Oracle, has been known to hoist his female belongings into the high levels of society.

The last period in the career of a pushing woman is the triumphant. This is when she has achieved fashion, and has virtually done pushing. There is nothing left to push for. The Belgravian citadel has fairly capitulated. Like Alexander weeping that there are no more worlds to conquer, she may indulge a transient regret that there are no more *salons* left to penetrate. [71] But rest is welcome after so harassing a struggle. And with rest comes a sensible improvement in her character and manners. The last stage of a pushing woman is emphatically better than the first. It is curious to notice what a change for the better is produced in her by the partial recovery of her self-respect. One might almost call her a pleasant person. She can at last afford to be civil, occasionally even good-natured. And this is only natural. In the thick of a struggle which taxes her energies to the uttermost, there is no time for courtesies and amenities. The better instincts of her nature necessarily remain in abeyance. But they reassert themselves, unless she be irretrievably spoilt, when the struggle is over.

At last she can afford to speak her true thoughts, consult her own tastes, and receive her own friends, not another's, like a lady to the manner born. And if this emancipation from a self-imposed thraldom is not too long deferred, if it finds her at sixty with a relish for gaiety still unslaked, she may yet be able to enjoy society herself and to render it enjoyable to others. How many women there are of whom one says, How pleasant they will be when they have done pushing! or have pushed enough to allow themselves and others a little rest! One longs for the time to arrive when they shall have kicked down the ladders by which they have mounted, and effaced the trace of the rebuffs which they have encountered. One longs to see them cleansed from the stains with which their toilsome struggle has bespattered them, enjoying the ease and [72] tranquillity of the after-push. If "getting on in society" must continue to be an object of female ambition, would it not be wise to abate the nuisance by rendering the process somewhat more easy? Might not some central authority be established to grant diplomas to pushing women, which would admit them *per saltum* to those select circles which they go through so much dirt to reach?

FEMININE AFFECTATIONS. [73]

The old form of feminine affectation used to be that of a die-away fine lady afflicted with a mysterious malady known by the name of the vapors, or one, no less obscure, called the spleen. Sometimes it was an etherealized being who had no capacity for homely things, but who passed her life in an atmosphere of poetry and music, for the most part expressing her vague ideas in halting rhymes that gave more satisfaction to herself than to her friends. She was probably an Italian scholar, and could quote Petrarch and Tasso, and did quote them pretty often; she might even be a Della Cruscan by honorable election, with her own peculiar wreath of laurel and her own silver lyre; any way she was "a sister of the Muses," and had something to do with Apollo and Minerva, whom she was sure to call Pallas, as being more poetical. Probably she had dealings with Diana too, for this kind of woman does not in any age affect the "sea-born," save in a hazy sentimental way that bears no fruits; a neatly-turned sonnet or a clever bit of counterpoint being to her worth all the manly love or fireside home delights that the world can give.

What is the touch of babies' dimpled fingers or the rosy kisses of babies' lips compared to the pleasures of being a sister of the Muses, and one of the beloved of Apollo? The Della Cruscan of [74] former days, or her modern avatar, will tell you that music and poetry are godlike and bear the soul away to heaven, but that the nursery is a prison, and babies no dearer gaolers than any other, and that household duties disgrace the aspiring soul mounting to the empyrean. This was the Ethereal Being of the last generation—the Blue-stocking, as a poetess in white satin, with her eyes turned up to heaven, and her hair in dishevelled cascades about her neck. She dropped her mantle as she finally departed; and we still have the Della Cruscan essence, if not in the precise form of earlier times. We still have ethereal beings who, as the practical outcome of their

etherealization, rave about music and poetry, and Hallé and Ruskin, and horribly neglect their babies and the weekly bills.

A favorite form of feminine affectation among certain opposers of the prevalent fast type is in an intense womanliness, an aggravating intensity of womanliness, that makes one long for a little roughness, just to take off the cloying excess of sweetness. This kind is generally found with large eyes, dark in the lids and hollow in the orbit, by which a certain spiritual expression is given to the face, a certain look of being consumed by the hidden fire of lofty thought, that is very effective. It does not destroy the effectiveness that the real cause of the darkened lids and cavernous orbits, when not antimony, is most probably internal disease; eyes of this sort stand for spirituality and loftiness of thought and intense womanliness of nature, and, as all men are [75] neither chemists nor doctors, the simulation does quite as well as truth.

The main characteristic of these women is self-consciousness. They live before a moral mirror, and pass their time in attitudinizing to what they think the best advantage. They can do nothing simply, nothing spontaneously and without the fullest consciousness as to how they do it, and how they look while they are doing it. In every action of their lives they see themselves as pictures, as characters in a novel, as impersonations of poetic images or thoughts. If they give you a glass of water, or take your cup from you, they are Youth and Beauty ministering to Strength or Age, as the case may be; if they bring you a photographic album, they are Titian's Daughter carrying her casket, a trifle modernized; if they hold a child in their arms, they are Madonnas, and look unutterable maternal love, though they never saw the little creature before, and care for it no more than for the puppy in the mews; if they do any small personal office, or attempt to do it, making believe to tie a shoestring, comb out a curl, fasten a button, they are Charities in graceful attitudes, and expect you to think them both charitable and graceful. Nine times out of ten they can neither tie a string nor fasten a button with ordinary deftness, for they have a trick of using only the ends of their fingers when they do anything with their hands, as being more graceful, and altogether fitting in better than would a firmer grasp with the delicate womanliness of the character; and the less sweet and more commonplace woman who does not [76] attitudinize morally, and never parades her womanliness, beats them out of the field for real helpfulness, and is the Charity which the other only plays at being.

This kind, too, affects, in theory, wonderful submissiveness to man. It upholds Griselda as the type of feminine perfection, and—still in theory—between independence and being tyrannized over, goes in for the tyranny. "I would rather my husband beat me than let me do too much as I liked," said one before she married, who, after she was married, managed to get entire possession of the domestic reins, and took good care that her nominal lord should be her practical slave. For, notwithstanding the sweet submissiveness of her theory, the intensely womanly woman has the most astonishing knack of getting her own way and imposing her own will on others. The real tyrant among women is not the one who flounces and splutters, and declares that nothing shall make her obey, but the self-mannered, large-eyed, and intensely womanly person, who says that Griselda is her ideal, and that the whole duty of woman lies in unquestioning obedience to man.

In contrast with this special affectation is the mannish woman—the woman who wears a double-breasted coat with big buttons, of which she flings back the lappels with an air, understanding the suggestiveness of a wide chest and the need of unchecked breathing; who wears unmistakeable shirtfronts, linen collars, vests, and plain ties, like a man; who folds her arms or [77] sets them akimbo, like a man; who even nurses her feet and cradles her knees, in spite of her petticoats, and makes believe that the attitude is comfortable because it is manlike. If the excessively womanly woman is affected in her sickly sweetness, the mannish woman is affected in her breadth and roughness. She adores dogs and horses, which she places far above children of all ages. She boasts of how good a marksman she is—she does not call herself markswoman—and how she can hit right and left, and bring down both birds flying. When she drinks wine she holds the stem of the glass between her first two fingers, hollows her underlip, and tosses it off, throwing her head well back—she would disdain the ladylike sip or the closer gesture of ordinary women. She is great in cheese and bitter beer, in claret cup and still champagne, but she despises the puerilities of sweets or of effervescing wines. She rounds her elbows and turns her wrist outward, as men round their elbows and turn their wrists outward. She is fond of carpentry, she says, and boasts of her powers with the plane and saw; for charms to her watch-chain she wears a corkscrew, a gimlet, a big knife, and a small foot-rule; and in entire contrast with the intensely womanly woman, who uses the tips of her fingers only, the mannish woman when she does anything uses the whole hand, and if she had to thread a needle would thread it as much by her palm as by her fingers. All of which is affectation—from first to last affectation; a mere assumption of virile fashions utterly inharmonious to the whole being, physical and mental, of a [78] woman.

Then there is the affectation of the woman who has taken propriety and orthodoxy under her special protection, and who regards it as a personal insult when her friends and acquaintances go beyond the exact limits of her mental sphere. This is the woman who assumes to be the antiseptic element in society, who makes believe that without her the world and human nature would go to the dogs, and plunge headlong into the abyss of sin and destruction forthwith; and that not all the grand heroism of man, not all his thought and energy and high endeavor and patient seeking after truth, would serve his turn or the world's if she did not spread her own petty preserving nets, and mark out the boundary lines within which she would confine the range of thought and speculation. She knows that this assumption of spiritual beadledom is mere affectation, and that

other minds have as much right to their own boundary lines as she claims for herself; but it seems to her pretty to assume that woman generally is the consecrated beadle of thought and morality, and that she, of all women, is most specially consecrated.

As an offshoot of this kind stands the affectation of simplicity—the woman whose mental attitude is self-depreciation, and who poses herself as a mere nobody when the world is ringing with her praises. "Is it possible that your Grace has ever heard of *me*?" said one of this class with prettily affected *naïveté* at a time when all England was astir about her, and when colors and fashions [79] went by her name to make them take with the public at large. No one knew better than the fair *ingénue* in question how far and wide her fame had spread, but she thought it looked modest and simple to assume ignorance of her own value, and to declare that she was but a creeping worm when all the world knew that she was a soaring butterfly.

There is a certain little kind of affectation very common among pretty women; and this is the affectation of not knowing that they are pretty, and not recognising the effect of their beauty on men. Take a woman with bewildering eyes, say, of a maddening size and shape, and fringed with long lashes that distract you to look at; the creature knows that her eyes are bewildering, as well as she knows that fire burns and that ice melts; she knows the effect of that trick she has with them—the sudden uplifting of the heavy lid, and the swift, full gaze that she gives right into a man's eyes. She has practiced it often in the glass, and knows to a mathematical nicety the exact height to which the lid must be raised, and the exact fixity of the gaze. She knows the whole meaning of the look, and the stirring of men's blood that it creates; but if you speak to her of the effect of her trick, she puts on an air of extremest innocence, and protests her entire ignorance as to anything her eyes may say or mean: and if you press her hard she will look at you in the same way for your own benefit, and deny at the very moment of offence.

Various other tricks has she with those bewildering eyes of hers—each more perilous than the [80] other to men's peace; and all unsparingly employed, no matter what the result. For this is the woman who flirts to the extreme limits, then suddenly draws up and says she meant nothing. Step by step she has led you on, with looks and smiles, and pretty doubtful phrases always susceptible of two meanings, the one for the ear by mere word, the other for the heart by the accompaniments of look and manner, which are intangible; step by step she has drawn you deeper and deeper into the maze where she has gone before as your decoy; then, when she has you safe, she raises her eyes for the last time, complains that you have mistaken her cruelly, and that she has meant nothing more than any one else might mean; and what can she do to repair her mistake? Love you? marry you? No; she is engaged to your rival, who counts his thousands to your hundreds; and what a pity that you had not seen this all along, and that you should have so misunderstood her! Besides, what is there about her that you or any one should love?

Of all the many affectations of women, this affectation of their own harmlessness when beautiful, and of their innocence of design when they practice their arts for the discomfiture of men, is the most dangerous and the most disastrous. But what can one say to them? The very fact that they are dangerous disarms a man's anger and blinds his perception until too late. That men love though they suffer is the woman's triumph, guilt, and condonation; and so long as the trick succeeds it will be practiced.

Another affectation of the same family is the extreme friendliness and familiarity which some [81] women adopt in their manners towards men. Young girls affect an almost maternal tone to boys of their own age, or a year or so older; and they, too, when their wiser elders remonstrate, declare they mean nothing, and how hard it is that they may not be natural. This form of affectation, once begun, continues through life, being too convenient to be lightly discarded; and youthful matrons not long out of their teens assume a tone and ways that would about befit middle age counselling giddy youth, and that might by chance be dangerous even then if the "Indian summer" was specially bright and warm.

Then there is the affectation pure and simple, which is the mere affectation of manner, such as is shown in the drawling voice, the mincing gait, the extreme gracefulness of attitude that by consciousness ceases to be grace, and the thousand little *minauderies* and coquetries of the sex known to us all. And there is the affectation which people of a higher social sphere show when they condescend to those of low estate, and talk and look as if they were not quite certain of their company, and scarcely knew if they were Christian or heathen, savage or civilized. And there is the affectation of the maternal passion with women who are never by any chance seen with their children, but who speak of them as if they were never out of their sight; the affectation of wifely adoration with women who are to be met about the world with every man of their acquaintance rather than with their lawful husbands; the affectation of asceticism in women who lead a [82] thoroughly self-enjoying life from end to end; and the affectation of political fervor in those who would not give up a ball or a new dress to save Europe from universal revolution.

Go where we will, affectation of being something she is not meets us in woman, like a ghost we cannot lay or a mist we cannot sweep away. In the holiest and the most trivial things alike we find it penetrating everywhere—even in church, and at her prayers, when the pretty penitent, rising from her lengthy orison, lifts her eyes and looks about her furtively to see who has noticed her self-abasement and to whom her picturesque piety has commended itself.

All sorts and patterns of good girls and pleasant women are very dear and delightful; but the pearl of great price is the thoroughly natural and unaffected woman—that is, the woman who is truthful to her core, and who would as little condescend to act a pretence as she would dare to tell a lie.

IDEAL WOMEN. [83]

It is often objected against fault-finders, writers or others, that they destroy but do not build up, that while industriously blaming errors they take good care not to praise the counteracting virtues, that in their zeal against the vermin of which they are seeking to sweep the house clean they forget the nobler creatures which do the good work of keeping things sweet and wholesome. But it is impossible to be continually introducing the saving clause, "all are not so bad as these." The seven thousand righteous who have not bowed the knee to Baal are understood to exist in all communities; and, vicious as any special section may be, there must always be the hidden salt and savor of the virtuous to keep the whole from falling into utter corruption. This is specially true of modern women. Certainly, some of them are as unsatisfactory as any of their kind that have ever appeared on earth before, but it would be very queer logic to infer, therefore, that all are bad alike, and that our modern womanhood is as ill off as the Cities of the Plain which could not be saved for want of the ten just men to save them.

Happily, we have noble women among us yet; women who believe in something beside pleasure, and who do their work faithfully, wherever it may lie; women who can and do sacrifice [84] themselves for love and duty, and who do not think they were sent into the world simply to run one mad life-long race for wealth, for dissipation, or for distinction. But the life of such women is essentially in retirement; and though the lesson they teach is beautiful, yet its influence is necessarily confined, because of the narrow sphere of the teacher. When such public occasions for devotedness as the Crimean war occur, we can in some sort measure the extent to which the self-sacrifice of women can be carried; but in general their noblest virtues come out only in the quiet and secresy of home, and the most heroic lives of patience and well-doing go on in seclusion, uncheered by sympathy and unrewarded by applause.

Still, it is impossible to write of one absolute womanly ideal—one single type that shall satisfy every man's fancy; for, naturally, what would be perfection to one is imperfection to another, according to the special bent of the individual mind. Thus one man's ideal of womanly perfection is in beauty, mere physical outside beauty; and not all the virtues under heaven could warm him into love with red hair or a snub nose. He is entirely happy if his wife is undeniably the handsomest woman of his acquaintance, and holds himself blessed when all men admire and all women envy. But for his own sake rather than for hers. Pleasant as her loveliness is to look on, it is pleasanter to know that he is the possessor of it. The "handsomest woman in the room" comes into the same category as the finest picture or the most thoroughbred horse within his sphere, [85] and if the degree of pride in his possession is different, the kind is the same. And so in minor proportions, from the most beautiful woman of all, to simply beauty as a *sine qua non*, whatever else may be wanting. One other thing only is as absolute as this beauty, and that is its undivided possession.

Another man's ideal is a good housekeeper and a careful mother, and he does not care a rush whether his wife, if she is these, is pretty or ugly. Provided she is active and industrious, minds the house well, and brings up the children as they ought to be brought up, has good principles, is trustworthy, and even-tempered, he is not particular as to color or form, and can even be brought to tolerate a limp or a squint. Given the great foundations of an honorable home, and he will forego the lath and plaster of personal appearance which will not bear the wear and tear of years and their troubles. The solid virtues stand. His balance at the banker's is a fact; his good name and credit with the tradespeople is a fact; so is the comfort of his home; so are the health, the morals, the education of his children. All these are the true realities of life to him; but the beauty which changes to deformity by the small-pox, which fades under dyspepsia, grows stale by habit, and is worn threadbare by the end of twenty years, is only a skin-deep grace which he does not value. Perhaps he is right. Certainly, some of the happiest marriages among one's acquaintances are those where the wife has not one perceptible physical charm, and where the whole force of [86] her magnetic value lies in what she is, not in how she looks.

Another man wants a tender, adoring, fair-haired seraph, who will worship him as a demigod, and accept him as her best revelation of strength and wisdom. The more dependent she is, the better he will love her; the less of conscious thought, of active will, of originative power she has, the greater his regard and tenderness. To be the one sole teacher and protector of such a gentle little creature seems to him the most delicious and the best condition of married life; and he holds Milton's famous lines to be expressive of the only fitting relation between men and women. The adoring seraph is his ideal; Griselda, Desdemona, Lucy Ashton, are his highest culminations of womanly grace; and the qualities which appeal the most powerfully to his generosity are the patience which will not complain, the gentleness that cannot resent, and the love which nothing can chill.

Another man wants a cultivated intelligence in his ideal. As an author, an artist, a student, a statesman, he would like his wife to be able to help him by the contact of bright wit and ready intellect. He believes in the sex of minds, and holds only that work complete which has been created by the one and perfected by the other. He sees how women have helped on the leaders in troubled times; he knows that almost all great men have owed something of their greatness to the influence of a mother or a wife; he remembers how thoughts which had lain dumb in men's [87]

brains for more than half their lifetime suddenly woke up into speech and activity by the influence of a woman great enough to call them forth. The adoring seraph would be an encumbrance, and nothing better than a child upon his hands; and the soul which had to be awakened and directed by him would run great chance of remaining torpid and inactive all its days. He has his own life to lead and round off, and so far from wishing to influence another's, wants to be helped for himself.

Another man cares only for the birth and social position of the woman to whom he gives his name and affection; to another yellow gold stands higher than blue blood, and "my wife's father" may have been a rag-picker, so long as rag-picking had been a sufficiently rich alembic with a residuum admitting of no kind of doubt. Venus herself without a dowry would be only a pretty sea-side girl with a Newtown pippin in her hand; but Miss Kilmansegg would be something worth thinking of, if but little worth looking at. One man delights in a smart, vivacious little woman of the irrepressible kind. It makes no difference to him how petulant she is, how full of fire and fury; the most passionate bursts of temper simply amuse him, like the anger of a canary-bird, and he holds it fine fun to watch the small virago in her tantrums, and to set her going again when he thinks she has been a long enough time in subsidence. His ideal of woman is an amusing little plaything, with a great facility for being put up, and a dash of viciousness to give it piquancy.

Another wants a sweet and holy saint whose patient humility springs from principle rather than from fear; another likes a blithe-tempered, healthy girl with no nonsense about her, full of fun and ready for everything, and is not particular as to the strict order or economy of the housekeeping, provided only she is at all times willing to be his pleasant playmate and companion. Another delights in something very quiet, very silent, very home-staying. One must have first-rate music in his ideal woman; another unimpeachable taste; a third, strict orders; a fourth, liberal breadth of nature; and each has his own ideal, not only of nature but of person—to the exact shade of the hair, the color of the eyes, and the oval of the face. But all agree in the great fundamental requirements of truth, and modesty, and love, and unselfishness; for though it is impossible to write of one womanly ideal as an absolute, it is very possible to detail the virtues which ought to belong to all alike. [88]

If this diversity of ideals is true of individuals, it is especially true of nations, each of which has its own ideal of woman varying according to what is called the genius of the country. To the Frenchman, if we are to believe Michelet and the novelists, it is a feverish little creature, full of nervous energy, but without muscular force; of frail health and feeble organization; a prey to morbid fancies which she has no strength to control or to resist; now weeping away her life in the pain of finding that her husband, a man gross and material because husband, does not understand her; now sighing over her delicious sins in the arms of the lover who does; without reasoning faculties, but with divine intuitions that are as good as revelations; without cool judgment, but with the light of burning passions that guide her just as well; thinking by her heart, yet carrying the most refined metaphysics into her love; subtle; incomprehensible by the coarser brain of man; a creature born to bewilder and to be misled, to love and to be adored, to madden men and to be destroyed by them. [89]

It does not much signify that the reality is a shrewd, calculating, unromantic woman, with a hard face and keen eyes, who for the most part makes a good practical wife to her common-sense middle-aged husband, who thinks more of her social position than of her feelings, more of her children than of her lovers, more of her purse than of her heart, and whose great object of life is a daily struggle for centimes. It pleases the French to idealize their eminently practical and worldly-wise women into this queer compound of hysterics and adultery; and if it pleases them it need not displease us.

To the German his ideal is of two kinds—one, his Martha, the domestic broad-faced *Hausmutter*, who cooks good dinners at small cost, and mends the family linen as religiously as if this were the Eleventh Commandment especially appointed for feminine fingers to keep, the poetic culmination of whom is Charlotte cutting bread and butter; the other, his Mary, his Bettina, full of mind and æsthetics, and heart-uplifting love, yearning after the infinite with holes in her stockings and her shoes down at heel. For what are coarse material mendings to the æsthetic soul yearning after the infinite, and worshipping at the feet of the prophet? [90]

In Italy the ideal woman of modern times is the ardent patriot, full of active energy, or physical force, and dauntless courage.

In Poland it is the patriot too, but of a more refined and etherealized type, passively resenting Tartar tyranny by the subtlest feminine scorn, and living in perpetual music and mourning.

In Spain it is a woman beautiful and impassioned, with the slight drawback of needing a world of looking after, of which the men are undeniably capable.

In Mohammedan countries generally it is a comely smooth-skinned Dudù, patient and submissive, always in good humor with her master, economical in house-living to suit the meanness, and gorgeous in occasional attire to suit the ostentation, of the genuine Oriental; but by no means Dudù ever asleep and unoccupied; for, if not allowed to take part in active outside life, the Eastern's wife or wives have their home duties and their maternal cares like all other women, and find to their cost that, if they neglect them unduly, they will have a bad time of it with Ali Ben Hassan when the question comes of piastres and sequins, and the dogs of Jews who demand payment, and the pigs of Christians who follow suit.

The American ideal is of two kinds, like the German—the one, the clever manager, the woman with good executive faculty in the matters of buckwheat cakes and oyster gumbo, as is needed in a country so poorly provided with "helps;" the other, the aspiring soul who puts her aspirations [91] into deeds, and goes out into the world to do battle with the sins of society as editress, preacher, stump orator, and the like. It must be rather embarrassing to some men that this special manifestation of the ideal woman at times advocates miscegenation and free love; but perhaps we of the narrow old conventional type are not up to the right mark yet, and have to wait until our own women are thoroughly emancipated before we can rightly appreciate these questions. At all events, if this kind of thing pleases the Americans, it is no more our business to interfere with them than with the French compound; and if miscegenation and free love seem to them the right manner of life, let them follow it.

In all countries, then, the ideal woman changes, chameleon-like, to suit the taste of man; and the great doctrine that her happiness does somewhat depend on his liking is part of the very foundation of her existence. According to his will she is bond or free, educated or ignorant, lax or strict, house-keeping or roving; and though we advocate neither the bondage nor the ignorance, yet we do hold to the principle that, by the laws which regulate all human communities everywhere, she is bound to study the wishes of man, and to mould her life in harmony with his liking. No society can get on in which there is total independence of sections and members, for society is built up on the mutual dependence of all its sections and all its members. Hence the defiant attitudes which women have lately assumed, and their indifference to the wishes and [92] remonstrances of men, cannot lead to any good results whatever. It is not the revolt of slaves against their tyrants—in that we could sympathize—which they have begun, but a revolt against their duties. And this it is which makes the present state of things so deplorable. It is the vague restlessness, the fierce extravagance, the neglect of home, the indolent fine-ladyism, the passionate love of pleasure which characterise the modern woman, that saddens men, and destroys in them that respect which their very pride prompts them to feel. And it is the painful conviction that the ideal woman of truth and modesty and simple love and homely living has somehow faded away under the paint and tinsel of this modern reality which makes us speak out as we have done, in the hope, perhaps a forlorn one, that if she could be made to thoroughly understand what men think of her, she would, by the very force of natural instinct and social necessity, order herself in some accordance with the lost ideal, and become again what we once loved and what we all regret.

WOMAN AND THE WORLD. [93]

This, we are told in a tone of pathetic resignation, is a day of hard sayings for women. It is, we will venture to add, a day when women have to meet hard sayings with replies a little less superficial than the conventional stare of outraged womanhood or the trivial retort on the follies of men. Grant that woman's censors are as cynical and hollow-hearted as you will, there can be no doubt that their criticisms are simply the expression of a general uneasiness, and that that uneasiness has some ground to go upon. It is possible that observers across the water may be cynical in denouncing the "magnificent indecency" of the heroines of New York. It is possible that the schoolmasters of Berlin may be cynical in calling public opinion to their aid against the degrading exhibitions of the Prussian capital. It is possible that the thunders of the Vatican are merely an instance of Papal cynicism. It is possible that the protest of the Bishop of Orleans is as hollow-hearted as the protests of censors nearer home. But such a world-wide outbreak of cynicism without a cause is a somewhat improbable event, and the improbability is increased when we remark the silent acquiescence of the women of America and the Continent in the justice of these censures.

It is only the British mother who ventures to protest. Now, we Englishmen have always felt a sort [94] of national pride in the British mother. It has been a part of our patriotic self-satisfaction to pique ourselves on her icy decorum, on the merciless severity of her virtue. Colorless, uninteresting, limited as Continental critics pronounced her to be, we cherished her the more as something specially our own, and regarded the Channel as a barrier providentially invented for the isolation of her spotless prudery. It was peculiarly gratifying to suppose that on the other side of it there were no British homes, no British maidens, no British mothers. And it must be owned that the British mother took her cue admirably. She owned, with a sigh of complacency, that she was not as other women. She shuddered at foreign morals, and tabooed French novels. She shook all life and individuality out of her girls as un-English and Continental. She denounced all aspirations after higher and larger spheres of effort as unfeminine. Such a type of woman was naturally dull enough, but it fairly came up to its own standard; and if its respectability was prudery, it still earned, and had a right to claim, man's respect. The amusing thing is the persistence in the claim when the type has passed away.

The British spouse has bloomed into the semi-detached wife, with a husband always conveniently in the distance, and a cicisbeo as conveniently in the corner. The British mother has died into the faded matrimonial schemer, contemptuous of younger sons. The innocent simper of the British maiden has developed into the loud laugh and the horsey slang of the girl of the season. But [95] maiden and matron are still on one point faithful to the traditions of their grandmothers, and front all censorious comers with a shrug of their shoulder-straps and a flutter of indignant womanhood. And maiden and matron still claim their insular exemption from the foibles of their

sex. The Pope may do what he will with the women of Italy, and Monseigneur of Orleans may deal stern justice out to the women of France; Continental immorality is in the nature of things; but there is something else that is in the nature of things too, and before the impeccable majesty of British womanhood every critic must stand abashed.

Unfortunately, we are no sooner awed with the marble silence of our Hermione than Hermione descends from her pedestal and falls a-talking like other people. Woman, in a word, protests; and protests are often very dangerous things to the protesters. Nothing, for instance, can seem more simple or more effective than the *tu quoque* retort, and as it is familiar to feminine disputants, we are favored with it in every possible form. If the girl of the period is fast and frivolous, is the young man of the period any better? No sketch can be more telling than the picture which she is ready to draw of his lounging ways, his epicurean indolence, his boredom at home, his foppery abroad, the vacancy of his stare, the inanity of his talk, his incredible conceit, his life vibrating between the Club and the stable. She hits off with a charming vivacity the list of his accomplishments—his skill at flirtation, his matchless ability at croquet, his assiduity over *Bell's Life*, the cleverness of his book on the Derby. No sensible or well-informed girl, she tells us, can talk for ten minutes to this creature without weariness and disgust at his ignorance, his narrowness, his triviality; no modestly-dressed or decently-mannered girl can win the slightest share of his attentions. Married, he is as frivolous as before marriage; he selects the toilette of the *demi-monde* as an agreeable topic of domestic conversation, he resents affection and proclaims home a bore, he grudges the birth of children as an additional expense, he stunts and degrades the education of his girls, he is the despot of his household and the dread of his family. [96]

The sketch is powerful enough in its way, but the conclusion which the fair artist draws is at least an odd one. We prepare ourselves to hear that woman has resolved to extirpate such a monster as this, or that she will remain an obstinate vestal till a nobler breed of wooers arises. What woman owns that she really does is to mould herself as much on the monster's model as she can. According to her own account, she puts nature's picture of herself into the hands of this imbecile, invites him to blur it as he will, and lets him write under the daub "*Ego feci.*" As he cannot talk sense, she stoops to bandy chaff and slang. As he refuses to be attracted by modesty of dress and manner, she apes the dress and manner of the *demi-monde*. His indolence, his triviality, his worldliness become her own. As he finds home a bore, she too plunges into her round of dissipation; as he objects to children, she declines to be a mother; as he wishes to get the girls off his hands, she flings them at the head of the first comer. [97]

Now, if such a defence as this at all adequately represents the facts of the case, we can only say that the girl of the period must be a far lower creature than we have ever asserted her to be. A sensible girl stooping to slang, a modest girl flinging aside modesty, simply to conquer a fool and a fop, is a satire upon woman which none but a woman could have invented, and which we must confess to be utterly incredible to men. But the assumption upon which the whole of this mimetic theory is based is one well worthy of a little graver consideration.

"Tell me how to improve the youth of France," said Napoleon one day to Madame de Campan. "Give them good mothers," was the reply. There are some things which even a Napoleon may be pardoned for feeling a little puzzled in undertaking, and Madame de Campan would no doubt have added much to the weight of her reply by a few practical words as to the machinery requisite for the supply of the article she recommended. But her request is now the cry of the world. The general uneasiness of which we have spoken before arises simply from the conviction that woman is becoming more and more indifferent to her actual post in the social economy of the world, and the criticisms in which it takes form, whether grave or gay, could all be summed up in Madame de Campan's request, "Give us good mothers."

After all protests against limiting the sphere of the sex to a single function of their existence, public opinion still regards woman primarily in her relation to the generation to come. If it censures the sensible girl who stoops to slang, or the modest girl who stoops to indecency, it is because the sense and the modesty which they abandon is not theirs to hold or to fling away, but the heritage of the human race. But this seems to be less and less the feeling of woman herself. For good or for evil, or, perhaps more truly, for both good and evil, woman is becoming conscious every day of new powers, and longing for an independent sphere in which she can exert them. Marriage is aimed at with a passionate ardor unknown before, not as a means of gratifying affection, but as a means of securing independence. [98]

To the unmarried girl life is a sheer bondage, and there is no sacrifice too great to be left untried if it only promises a chance of deliverance. She learns to despise the sense, the information, the womanly reserve which fail to attract the deliverer. She has to sell herself to purchase her freedom; and she will take very strong measures to secure a purchaser. The fop, the fool, little knows the keen scrutiny with which the gay creature behind her fan is taking stock of his feeble preferences, is preparing to play upon his feebler aversions. Pitiful as he is, it is for him that she arranges her artillery on the toilette-table, the "little secrets," the powder bloom, the rouge "precipitated from the damask rose-leaf," the Styrian lotion that gives "beauty and freshness to the complexion, plumpness to the figure, clearness and softness to the skin." He has a faint flicker of liking for brunettes; she lays her triumphant fingers on her "walnut stain," and darkens into the favorite tint. He loves plumpness, and her "Sinai Manna" is at hand to secure *embonpoint*. Belladonna flashes on him from her eyes, Kohl and antimony deepen the blackness of her eyebrows, "bloom of roses" blushes from her lips. She stoops to conquer, and it is no wonder that the fop and the fool go down. [99]

The freedom she covets comes with marriage, but it is a freedom threatened by a thousand accidents, and threatened, above all, by maternity. It is of little use to have bowed to slang and shoulder-straps, if it be only to tie oneself to a cradle. The nursery stands sadly in the way of the free development of woman; it clips her social enjoyment, it curtails her bonnet bills. "The slavery of nursing a child," one fair protester tells us, "only a mother knows." And so she invents a pretty theory about the damage done to modern constitutions by our port-drinking forefathers, and ceases to nurse at all. But even this is only partial independence; she pants for perfect freedom from the cares of maternity. Her tone becomes the tone of the household, and the spouse she has won growls over each new arrival. She is quite ready to welcome the growl. "Nature," a mother informs us, "turns restive after the birth of two or three children," and mothers turn restive with nature. "Whatever else you may do," she adds, "you will never persuade us into liking to have children," and, if we did, we should not greatly value the conversion. And so woman wins her [100] liberty, and bows her emphatic reply to the world's appeal, "Give us good mothers," by declining to be a mother at all.

By the sacrifice of womanliness, by the sacrifice of modesty, by flattering her wooer's base preferences before marriage, by encouraging his baser selfishness afterwards, by hunting her husband to the club and restricting her maternal energies to a couple of infants, woman has at last bought her freedom. She is no slave to a husband as her mother was, she is not buried beneath the cares of a family like her grandmother. She has changed all that, and the old world of home and domestic tenderness and parental self-sacrifice lies in ruins at her feet. She has her liberty; what will she do with it? As yet, freedom means simply more slang, more jewelry, more selfish extravagance, less modesty. As we meet her on the stairs, as we see the profuse display of her charms, as we listen to the flippant, vapid chatter, we turn a little sickened from woman stripped of all that is womanly, and cry to Heaven, as Madame de Campan cried to the Emperor —"Give us good mothers."

UNEQUAL MARRIAGES. [101]

Acute ladies who concern themselves much with the superficial social currents of the time are beginning to perceive, or at least to think that they perceive, a fatal and growing tendency to *mésalliances* on the part of men who ought to know better. They complain not merely of the doting old gentleman who has been a bachelor long enough to lose his wits, and so marries his cook or his housemaid, nor of the debauched young simpleton who takes a wife from a casino or the bar of a night-*café*. Actions of this sort are as common at one time as at another. Old fools and young fools maintain a pretty steady average. Their silly exploits are the issue, not of the tendencies of the age, but of their own individual and particular lack of wits. They do not affect the general direction of social feeling, nor have we any right to argue up from their preposterous connexions to the influences and conditions of the society of which they are only the abnormal and irregular growths. What people mean, when they talk of an increase in the number of men who marry beneath them, is that men otherwise sensible and respectable and sober-minded perpetrate the irregularity in something like cold blood, and with a measure of deliberation. Whether observers who have formed this opinion are right, or are only anticipating their own [102] apprehensions and alarms, is difficult to ascertain. A good deal depends on the accidental range of the observer's own acquaintances, and still more on their candor or discreet reticence.

Besides, how are we to know how far one generation is worse than generations which have gone before it? Men are, after due time, forgiven for this defiance of social usage, and women who were barely presentable in youth become presentable enough by the time they reach middle age. People may seem to us to be very equally and justly mated who five-and-twenty years ago were the town's talk. It is practically impossible, therefore, to compare the actual number of unequal marriages in our day with those of a generation back. People may have their ideas, but verification is not to be had. All we can do is to estimate the increase in the conditions which are likely to make men find wives in a rank below their own. If we look at these, there may be a good many reasons for believing that the apprehensions of the shrewd and alarmed observers are not without justification.

When a wise man with a living or a name to make, or both, looks for a wife, he certainly does not desire a person who shall be troublesome and an impediment to him. He wants a cheerful, sensible, and decently thrifty person. He probably has no inclination for a bluestocking, nor for a lady with aggressive views on points of theology, nor for one who can beat him in political [103] discussion. Strong intellectual power he can most heartily dispense with. But then, on the other hand, he has no fancy for sitting day after day at table with a vapid, flippant, frivolous, empty soul who can neither talk nor listen, who takes no interest in things herself, and cannot understand why other people should take interest in them, who is penetrated with feeble little egoisms. An aggressive woman with opinions about prevenient grace, or the advantages of female emigration, or the functions of the deaconess, would be far preferable to this. She would irritate, but she would not fill the soul with everlasting despair, as the pretty vapid creature does. To discuss predestination and election over dinner is not nice, but still less is it nice to have to make talk with a fool, and to be obliged to answer her according to her folly.

As the education of modern girls of fashion chiefly aims at making them either very fast or very slow, it is not to be wondered at that men find it hard to realize their ideals among their equals in

position. It is not merely that so many marriageable young ladies are ignorant. They are this, but they are more. They are exacting and pretentious, and uneducated in the worst sense, for they are ignorant how ignorant they are, or even that they are ignorant at all.

Then there is a still more obvious, palpable, and impressive circumstance. A man with ordinary means looks with alarm on the too visible and too unbounded extravagance of the ladies from among whom he is expected to take a partner. The thought of the apparel, of the luxuries, of the [104] attendants, of the restless moving about, to which they have been accustomed, fills him with deep consternation. He might perhaps deceive himself into thinking that he could get on very well with an empty-minded woman, but he cannot forget the stern facts of arithmetic, nor hoodwink himself as to what would be left out of his income after he had paid for dresses, servants, household charges, carriages, parties, opera-boxes, traveling, and all the rest.

Besides the flippancy of so many women, and the extravagance of most women, arising from their inexperience of the trouble with which money is made and of the importance of keeping it after it has been made, there is something in the characteristics of modern social intercourse which makes men of a certain temper intensely anxious to avoid a sort of marriage which would, among other things, have the effect of committing them more deeply to this kind of intercourse. Such men shrink with affright from giving hostages to society for a more faithful compliance with its most dismal exactions. To them there is nothing more unendurable than the monotonous round of general hospitalities and ceremonials, ludicrously misnamed pleasure. A detestation of wearisome formalities does not imply any clownish or misanthropic reluctance to remember that those who feel it live in a world with other people, and that a thoroughly social life is the only just and full life.

But there is all the difference between a really social life and a hollow phantasmic imitation of it. A person may have the pleasantest possible circle of friends, and may like their society above all [105] things. This is one thing. But to have to mix much with numbers of thoroughly indifferent people, and in a superficial, hollow way, is a very different thing. Of course, men who take life just as it comes, who are not very sedulous about making the most of it in their own way, and are quite willing to do all that their neighbors do just because their neighbors do it, find no annoyance in this. Men cast in another mould find not only annoyance but absolute misery. They know also that marriage with a woman who is in the full tide of society means an infinite augmentation of this round of tiresome and thoroughly useless ceremonies. Add this consideration to the two other considerations of elaborate vapidness and unfathomable extravagance, and you have three tolerably good arguments why a man with large discourse of reason, looking before and after, should be slow to fasten upon himself bonds which threaten to prove so leaden.

The faults of the women of his own position, however, are a very poor reason why he should marry a woman beneath his own position. A man must be very weak to believe that, because fine ladies are often inane and extravagant, therefore women who are not fine ladies must be wise, clever, prudent, and everything else that belongs to the type of companionable womanhood. The fact of the mistress being a blank does not prove that the maid would be a prize. It may be wise to avoid the one, but it is certainly folly to seek the other. Granting that the housemaid or the [106] cook or the daughter of the coachman is virtuous, high-minded, refined, thoughtful, thrifty, and everything else that is desirable under the sun, all will fail to counterbalance the drawbacks that flow from the first inequality of position.

The misguided husband believes that he is going to live a plain unsophisticated life, according to nature and common sense, in company with one whom the hollowness and trickishness of society has never infected. He is not long in finding out his irreparable blunder. The lady is not received. People do not visit her, and although one of his motives in choosing a sort of wife whom people do not visit was the express desire of avoiding visits, yet he no sooner gets what he wished than his success begins to make him miserable. What he expected to please him as a relief mortifies him as a slight. Even if he be unsympathetic enough in nature not to care much for the disapproval of his fellows, he will rapidly find that his wife is a good deal less of a philosopher in these points, and that, though he may relish his escape from the miseries of society, she will vigorously resent her exclusion from its supposed delights.

Again, from another point of view, he is tolerably sure to find that the common opinion of society about unequal unions is not so unsound as he used scornfully to suppose it to be. The vapidity of a polite woman is bad, but the vapidity of a woman who is not polite is decidedly worse. A simpering unthinking woman with good manners is decidedly better than an unthinking woman [107] with imperfect manners; and if polish can spoil nature among one set of people, certainly among another set nature may be as much spoilt by lack of polish. It does not follow, from a person being indifferently well-bred, that therefore she is profoundly wise and thoughtful and poetic, and capable of estimating the things of this world at their worth. Boys at college indulge in this too generous fallacy. For grown-up men there is less excuse. They ought to know that obscure uneducated women are all the more likely on that account to fall short of magnanimity, self-control, self-containing composure, than girls who have grown up with a background of bright and gracious tradition, however little their education may have done to stimulate them to make the foreground like it. To have a common past is the first secret of happy association—a past common in ideas, sentiments, and growth, if not common in external incidents.

One reason why a cultivated man is wretched with a vapid woman is that she has not traveled over a yard of that ground of knowledge and feeling which has in truth made his nature what it is. But a woman in his own station is more likely to have shared a past of this sort than a woman

of lower station. Mere community of general circumstances and surrounding does something. The obscure woman taken from inferior place has not the common past of culture, nor of circumstance either. The foolish man who has married away from his class trusts that somehow [108] or other nature will repair this. He assumes, in a real paroxysm of folly, that obscurity is the fostering condition of a richness of character which could not be got by culture. He pays the price of his blindness. Untended nature is more likely to produce weeds than choice fruits, and the chances in such cases as this are beyond calculation in favor of his having got a weed—in other words, having wedded himself to a life of wrangling, gloom, and swift deterioration of character. This result may not be invariable, but it must be more usual than not.

In the exceptional cases where a man does not repent of an unequal match of this sort, you will mostly find that the match was unequal only in externals, and that his character had been a very fit counterpart for that of a vulgar and uneducated woman before he made her his wife. This may lead one to think that there is something to be said for the woman in morganatic marriages. The men who do these things are not always, not even generally, philosophic men in search of an unsophisticated life, but unamiable, defiant persons, who only hate society either because it has failed to appreciate their qualities, or because they cannot be at the trouble to go through the ordinary amount of polite usage.

HUSBAND-HUNTING. [109]

What we have said in another place about the odium which attaches to "match-making" naturally applies in a far greater degree to "husband-hunting." Practically the two words mean much the same thing, since the successful result of a husband-hunt is of course a match, and match-making, in the common acceptation of the term, involves a husband-hunt. This latter fact is somewhat curious. There is no reason in the nature of things why the word match-making should be associated only with the pursuit of the unmarried male. On the contrary, the theory of marriage has always been that it is the woman who has to be hunted down. It is curious to note under what completely different circumstances, and occasionally in what grotesque forms, the same theory has been found all over the world, both in civilized and savage life. Sometimes the bride is carried away bodily from her home, as if nothing short of physical force could make a woman quit her maiden state. Sometimes the panting bridegroom has to run her down—no slight task if the adorer happens to be stout, and the adored one coquettish and fleet of foot. In marriage, this custom prevails only, we believe, among the savages, but visitors to the Crystal Palace may see how modern civilization has adapted it to courtship in the popular pastime of [110] kiss-in-the-ring.

We have read of a savage tribe in which the bride is thought no better than she should be, if, on the day after the wedding, the bridegroom does not show signs of having been vigorously pinched and scratched. This custom, again, is perhaps represented in civilized life by the kissing and struggling which are supposed every Christmas to go on under the mistletoe. It is not unworthy of remark, as regards these two points of comparison between civilization and barbarism, that, as the woman gets more civilized, she seems more disposed to meet her pursuer halfway. In the game of kiss-in-the-ring, for instance, although the lady does not run after the gentleman, but, on the contrary, shows her maiden modesty by giving him as hard a chase as she can, she still delicately paves the way for osculation by throwing the pocket-handkerchief. And, in the Christmas fights under the mistletoe (if we may take Mr. Dickens as an authority), slapping, and even pinching in moderation, are considered allowable—perhaps we ought to say proper—on the lady's part; but scratching—serious scratching, we mean, which would make her admirer's face look next morning as if he had been taking liberties with a savage bird or a cat—is thought not merely unnecessary, but unfair.

The difference between civilized and savage woman may perhaps help to indicate the reason why, now-a-days, match-making should, as a matter of fact, be associated with husband-hunting in spite of the theory that it is the woman who has to be hunted, not the man. Popular [111] phraseology has an awkward trick of making people unconsciously countenance the theories against which they most vehemently protest. Husband-hunting is a far more generally obnoxious word than even the much-injured match-making, simply because it flies in the face of the pet theory which we have described. But, if the theory really hold good in modern practice, why should man, not woman, be recognised as the professional match-maker's victim and legitimate game? Why does not wife-hunting, the word which this theory entitles us to expect, take its proper place in society? Heiress-hunting, indeed, is well known, but this can scarcely be considered a form of wife-hunting, for it is not the woman who is the object of pursuit, but her money-bags. We have the word heiress-hunting for the very obvious reason that heiresses are recognised game. The word husband-hunting exists for the same reason.

Are we to infer from the non-existence, or at any rate the non-appearance in good society, of the word wife-hunting, that the practice is anything but common—that, since a hunt necessarily implies pursuit on one side and flight on the other, a man cannot well be said to hunt a woman who is either engaged in hunting him, or else only too ready to meet him halfway? Are we gradually tending towards an advanced stage of civilization in which woman will be formally recognized as the pursuer, and man as the pursued? We are not bold enough to take under our protection a view so glaringly heterodox, but still we think it only common justice to point out [112]

that there are difficult problems in the present state of society which the view helps materially to solve. We fear, for instance, there can be no doubt that there is a good deal of truth in the Belgravian mother's lament that marriage is gradually ceasing to be considered "the thing" among the young men of the present day; that girls of good families and even good looks are taking to sisterhoods, and nursing-institutes, and new-fangled abominations, simply because there is no one to marry them.

It is not merely that the young men are getting every day rarer; though, unless there is some system, like Pharaoh's, for putting male infants to death, what can become of them all is a mystery. India and the colonies may absorb a good many, though these places also do duty in the absorption of spinsterhood. But this will not account for the alarming fact, that in almost every ball-room, no matter whether in the country or in town, there are usually at least three crinolines to one tail-coat, and that dancing bachelors are becoming so scarce that it is a question whether hostesses ought not, for their own peace of mind, to connive at the introduction of the Oriental nautch. Yet even the alarming scarcity of marriageable men is not so serious an evil as their growing disinclination to marry.

With the causes of this disinclination we are not now concerned. Some attribute it to the increase of luxurious and expensive habits among bachelors—habits specially fostered by "those hateful [113] clubs;" some to the "snobbishness" which makes a woman consider it beneath her dignity to marry into an establishment less stylish than that which it has perhaps taken her father all his life to secure; some to the *demi-monde*—an explanation very like the theory that small-pox is caused by pustules. But, whatever may be the causes of the disinclination, there can be but little doubt that it exists, and the worst part of the matter is, that it is found among rich men no less than among poor. That really poor men should not wish to marry is, even the Belgravian mother must admit, an admirable arrangement of nature. But it is too bad that so many men-about-town should seem rich enough for yachting, or racing, or opera-boxes, or even diamond necklaces—for anything, in short, but a wife. The fact is, that in the eyes of poor men a wife is associated chiefly with handsome carriages, showy dresses, fine furniture, and other forbidden luxuries; and, inasmuch as there is not one law of association for the rich and another for the poor, this view spreads, until even rich men consider whether it is not possible to secure the luxuries without the wife.

Now, since marriage is, on the whole, an institution with which society cannot very well dispense —at any rate not until some good substitute has been found for it—it is clear that rich men ought not to be allowed to treat it in this way. If modern civilization tends to beget a disinclination to marry, it ought also, on the principle of compensation, to provide some means for counteracting [114] this tendency, or keeping it under control. Is the increase of husband-hunting—we ask the question in a respectful and, we trust, purely philosophical spirit of inquiry—calculated to supply this great and obvious want? What are its merits, in this respect, as compared with the old-fashioned theory that woman should be wooed, not woo? Even the most inveterate hater of husband-hunting must admit that, so far as the great end of matrimony is concerned, the two sexes nowadays stand to each other in a most unnatural relation. It is alike the mission of both to marry, but whereas women are honorably anxious to fulfill this mission, men, as we have already seen, are too ready to shirk it. Yet, by a strange inversion of the usual order of things, to the very sex which evades the mission is its furtherance and chief control entrusted.

Besides, not only does woman take more kindly to the duty of matrimony than man—or at least nineteenth-century man—but she has comparatively nothing else to think about. A dozen occupations are open to him, but her one object in life, her whole being's end and aim, is to marry. Surely, if the art of marriage requires cultivation, it ought, like everything else, to be entrusted to those who can give their whole time to it, not to those who have so much else to do. Even when a bachelor is in a position to marry, and not unwilling to make the experiment, he is still far less fitted for the furtherance of matrimony than a woman. He, perhaps, meets a nice girl at a ball, is taken with her, and after a mild flirtation thinks, as he walks home in the moonlight, [115] that she would make a charming wife. He dreams about her, and next morning at breakfast, as he pensively eats a pound of steak, resolves that on the same afternoon, or the next at the very latest, he will contrive an accidental meeting, or even find some excuse for a call. But then comes office-work, or the *Times*, or some other distraction, and later on perhaps a visit from some matter-of-fact friend with an unromantic taste for "bitter," or a weakness for the Burlington Arcade. One day slips away, and by the next the image of the evening's idol has waxed comparatively faint. At least it is not sufficiently vivid to inspire him with courage enough for a call, or a too suspicious-looking rencontre. In a week he bows to the image, as it is driven by, as coolly as if he had never had a thought of making his heart its shrine; and thus a golden opportunity for bringing together two young people, in whose auspicious union the whole community has an interest, has been cruelly thrown away.

How different might the case have been if fashion had allowed the lady to take the initiative, instead of compelling her to sit idly at home! She has no office-work, nor *Times*, nor any business but that of bringing last night's flirtation to a practical issue. Assuming her to be satisfied as to the eligibility of her partner, there is nothing to prevent her giving her whole time and attention to his capture. She is as little likely to throw away any chance of an interview calculated to help in bringing about this result as he is to neglect an opportunity for winning the lawn sleeves or [116] silk gown. Marriage is of as much importance to her as either of these to him. It is, perhaps, not impossible that the mere notion of a woman's thus taking the initiative in courtship may to some appear outrageously immodest. But with this point we have nothing to do, as we have been

discussing the theory of husband-hunting, not with any reference to its modesty, but solely and exclusively in its connexion with the great question, how marriage is to be carried on. We put together the three facts that nineteenth-century civilization makes men indisposed to marry, that it gives women no object in life but marriage, and yet that it assigns the furtherance of marriage, which we assume to be an institution deserving of careful cultivation, not to those whose interest it is to promote it, but to those who are comparatively averse to it. Modest or immodest, husband-hunting obviously tends to remedy this misdirection and waste of force.

We take this to be the right explanation—and we have endeavored to make it an impartial one—of the charge not uncommonly brought against the young ladies of the present day, that, as compared with their mothers and grandmothers, they are rather forward and fast, and that husband-hunting in their hands, is gradually being developed to an extent scarcely compatible with the old-fashioned theories about maidenly modesty and reserve. The change may be considered the effort of modern civilization to remedy an evil of its own creation. The tide advances in one direction because it recedes in another. If the men will not come forward, the [117]
women must. It is all very well for satirists to call this immodest, but even modesty could be more easily dispensed with than marriage. Besides, without quitting our position as impartial observers, we may point out that it is only fair to the professor of husband-hunting to remember that there are two kinds of immodesty, and that some actions are immodest merely because it is the custom to consider them so. It would, no doubt, be immodest for a young lady to ride through Hyde Park in man's fashion. Yet what is there in the nature of things to make a side-saddle more modest than any other? The Amazons were positive prudes, and would never have even spoken to man if they could have contrived to carry on society without him; yet they rode astraddle. And if fashion could make this practice feminine, why should it not some day do as much for husband-hunting?

THE PERILS OF "PAYING ATTENTION." [118]

We have elsewhere asserted that the art of match-making requires cultivation. We are told, however, that, on the contrary, match-making is so zealously studied and skillfully pursued that it bids fair to be the great social evil of nineteenth-century civilization. The growing difficulty of procuring sons-in-law has called forth a corresponding increase in the skill required for capturing them, just as the wits of the detective are sharpened to keep pace with the expertness which the general spread of useful knowledge has conferred upon the thief. Eligible bachelors complain that scarcity of marrying men has much the same effect upon the match-making mother as scarcity of food upon the wolf. It makes her at once more ferocious and more cunning. Her invitations to croquet-parties and little dinners are so constant and so pressing that it is scarcely possible for her destined prey to refuse them all without manifest rudeness, and yet it is equally hard for him to go without being judiciously manœuvred into "paying attention" to the one young lady who has been selected to make him happy for life.

This chivalrous and graceful synonym for courtship in itself speaks volumes for the serious nature of the risk which he runs. The truly gallant assumption which underlies it, that an Englishman [119]
only "pays attention" to a woman when he has a solid businesslike offer of marriage to make her, not only puts a formidable weapon into the hands of the match-maker, but also leaves her victim without a most effectual means of protection. The national gallantry towards women upon which a Frenchman so plumes himself may be, as your true Briton declares, a poor sort of quality enough; a mere grimace and trick of the lips—not genuine stuff from the heart; having much the same relation to true chivalry that his *bière* has to beer, or his *potage* to soup. But at any rate it has this advantage, that it enables him to pay any amount of flowery compliments to a woman without risk of committing himself, or of being misunderstood.

If an Englishman asks a young lady after her sore throat, or her invalid grandmother, and throws into his voice that tone of eager interest or tender sympathy which a polite Frenchman would assume as a matter of course, he is at once suspected of matrimonial designs upon her. He is obliged to be as formal and businesslike in his mode of address as the lawyer's clerk who added at the end of a too ardent love-letter the saving clause "without prejudice." We have heard of a young lady who confided to her bosom friend that she that morning expected a proposal, and, when closely pressed for her reasons, blushingly confessed that the night before a gentleman had twice asked her whether she was fond of poetry, and four times whether she would like to go into the refreshment-room.

We do not mean to say that this tendency to look upon every "attention" as a preliminary step to [120]
an offer is entirely, or even principally, due to British want of gallantry. Our national theory of courtship and marriage has probably much more to do with it. We say "theory" advisedly, for our practice approaches every day nearer to that of the Continental nations whose mercenary view of the holy estate of matrimony we righteously abjure. Our system is, in fact, gradually becoming a clumsy compromise between the *mariage de convenance* and the *mariage d'amour*, with most of the disadvantages, and very few of the advantages, of either. Theoretically, English girls are allowed to marry for love, and to choose whichever they like best of all the admiring swains whom they fascinate at croquet-parties or balls. Practically, the majority marry for an establishment, and only flirt for love. They leave the school-room, no doubt, with an unimpeachably romantic conception of a youthful bridegroom who combines good looks, great

intellect, and fervent piety with a modest four thousand a year, paid quarterly.

But they are not very long in finding out that the men whom they like best, as being about their own age or still young enough to sympathise with their tastes and enter heartily into all their notions of fun, are rarely such as are pronounced by parents and guardians to be eligible; and so, after one or two attacks, more or less serious, of love-fever, they tranquilly look out for an admirer who can place the proper number of servants and horses at their disposal, while they in [121] return magnanimously decline to make discourteously minute inquiries as to the condition of his hair or teeth. A marriage made in this spirit, even where no pressure is put upon the young lady by parents or friends, and she is allowed full liberty of action, is open to all the charges ordinarily brought against the Continental *mariage de convenance*. Yet, on the other hand, it has not the advantage of being formally arranged beforehand by a couple of elderly people, who are in no hurry, and who have seen enough of the world to know thoroughly what they are about; nor, we may add, does it usually take place in time to avert some one or more of those troublesome flirtations with handsome, but penniless, ball-room heroes which are not always calculated to improve either temper or character.

Still, whatever our practice may be, we nevertheless do homage to the theory that, in this favored country, young ladies choose whatever husbands they like best, and marry for love; and although this theory is in some respects a serious obstacle to marriage, and often stands cruelly in the way of people with weak nerves, it places a powerful weapon in the hands of the dauntless and determined match-maker. If young people are to marry for love, they must obviously have every facility afforded them for meeting and fascinating each other. It is this consideration which reconciles the philosopher to some of our least entertaining entertainments, although, at the same time, it makes so much of our hospitality an organized hypocrisy.

It is, indeed, a hard fate to be obliged to leave your after-dinner cigar and George Eliot's last [122] novel in order to drive four miles through wind and snow to a party which your hostess has given, not because she has good fare, or good music, or agreeable guests, or anything, in short, really calculated to amuse you, but simply and solely because she has a tribe of daughters who somehow must be disposed of. Yet even a man of the Sir Cornewall Lewis stamp, who thinks that this world would be a very tolerable place but for its amusements, may forgive her when he reflects that business, not pleasure, is at the bottom of the invitation. If marriage is to be kept up, we must either abandon our theory that young ladies are allowed to choose husbands for themselves, or we must give them every possible facility for exercising the choice. Bachelors must be dragged, on every available pretext, and without the slightest reference to the nominal ends of amusement or hospitality, from the novel or cigar, and made to run the gauntlet of female charms.

From the Sir Cornewall Lewis point of view, with which nearly all Englishmen over thirty more or less sympathise, it is the only sound defence of many of our so-called entertainments that they are virtually daughter-shows—genteel auctions, without which a sufficiently brisk trade in matrimony could not possibly be carried on. The consciousness of this is doubtless in one way somewhat of an obstacle to flirtation, and gives the frisky matron a cruel advantage over her unmarried rival. A man must have oak and triple brass round his heart who can flirt perfectly at his ease when he knows that his "attentions" are not merely watched by vigilant chaperons, but [123] are actually reduced to a matter of numerical calculation—that a certain number of dances, or calls, or polite speeches will justify a stern father or big brother in asking his "intentions."

This application of arithmetic is, in some respects, as dangerous to courtship as to the Pentateuch. But, nevertheless, it gives the clever and courageous match-maker an advantage of which the eligible bachelor complains that she makes the most pitiless use. He finds himself manœuvred into "paying the attentions" which society considers the usual prelude to a marriage, with a dexterity which it is all but impossible to evade. The lady is played into his hands with much the same sort of skill that a conjuror exhibits in forcing a card. There are perhaps a number of other ladies present, in promiscuous flirtation with whom he sees, at first glance, an obvious means of escape. But this hope speedily turns out a delusion. One lady is vigilantly guarded by a jealous betrothed; a second is a poor relation, or humble friend, who knows that she would never get another invitation to the house if she once interfered with her patron's plans; a third is too plain to be approached on any ordinary calculation of probabilities; a fourth is hopelessly dull; the rest are married, and if not actually themselves in the conspiracy—which, however, is as likely as not—are still carefully chosen for their freedom from the flirting propensities of the frisky matron. The destined victim finds, in short, that he must either deliberately resign himself [124] to be bored to death, or boldly face the peril in store for him, and take his chance of evading or breaking the net. Nine men out of ten naturally choose the latter alternative, too often in that presumptuous spirit of self-confidence which is the match-maker's best ally.

A bachelor is perhaps never in so great danger of being caught as when he has come to the conclusion that he sees perfectly through the mother's little game and merely means to amuse himself by carrying on a strictly guarded flirtation with the daughter. We mean, of course, on the assumption that the daughter is either a pretty or clever girl, with whom any sort of flirtation is in itself perilous. His danger is all the greater if it happens—and it is only fair to young-ladydom to admit that it often does happen—that the daughter has sufficient spirit and self-respect to repudiate all share in the maternal plot. Many a man has been half surprised, half piqued, into serious courtship by finding himself vigorously snubbed and rebuffed where he had been led to imagine that his slightest advances would be only too eagerly received. But, in any case, the match-maker knows that, if she can only bring the two people whom she wishes to marry

sufficiently often into each other's society, the battle is half won. According to Lord Lytton, whom every one will admit to be an authority on the philosophy of flirtation, "proximity is the soul of love." And eligible bachelors complain that it becomes every day harder to avoid this perilous proximity, and the duty of "paying attention" which it implies, without being positively rude.

We have not much consolation to offer the sufferers who prefer this complaint. As regards our [125]
own statement that the art of match-making requires cultivation, we did not mean by it to imply that match-making is not vigorously carried on. So long as there are mothers left with daughters to be married, so long will match-making continue to be pursued; and it must obviously be pursued all the more energetically to keep pace with the growing disinclination of bachelors among the upper and middle classes to face the responsibilities of married life. We meant that match-making does not receive the sort of cultivation which it seems to us fairly to deserve, when we consider the paramount importance of the object which it at least professes to have in view, and the delicate nature of the instruments and experiments with which it is concerned.

We have not yet mustered up courage for the attempt to show what should be its proper cultivation; but we may safely say that so long as it is left in the hands of those who are influenced by merely mercenary or interested motives, and who watch the "attentions" of a bachelor, not in the spirit of a philosopher or a philanthropist, but in that of a Belgravian mother, it cannot be cultivated as a fine art. It can only be rescued from the unmerited odium into which it has fallen by being taken under the patronage of those who are in a position to practice it on purely artistic and disinterested grounds. In their hands, the now perilous process of "paying attention" would be studied and criticized in a new spirit. It might still, indeed, be treated [126]
arithmetically, as perhaps the most promising way of reducing it to the precision and certainty of an exact science. But still the problem would be to determine, not what is the least possible number of dances, calls, or compliments which may justify the intervention of a big brother or heavy father, but what number warrants the assumption that the flirtation has passed out of the frivolous into the serious stage. Three dances, for instance, may expose a man to being asked what are his "intentions," where six dances need not imply that he really has any. The mercenary match-maker considers only the first point; our ideal match-maker would lay far more stress upon the second. But still, in any case, this growing tendency to treat the practice of "paying attention" in the spirit of exact science offers at least one ray of hope to those who complain that, do what they will, they cannot escape having to pay this dangerous tribute. The tendency must sooner or later bear fruit in a generally recognised code of courtship (whether written or unwritten does not much matter), prescribing the precise number and character of the "attentions"—in their adaptation to dancing, croquet-playing, cracker-pulling, and other conventional pretexts for flirtation—which virtually amount to an offer of marriage. This scheme, we may mention, is not wholly imaginary. There is somewhere or other a stratum of English society in which such a code already exists. At least we have seen a book of etiquette in which, among similar ordinances, it was laid down that to hand anything—say a flower or a muffin—to a lady with the left hand was [127]
equivalent to a proposal. The general introduction of a system of this kind, although it might shorten the lives of timid or forgetful men, would obviously confer an unspeakable boon upon the majority of the match-maker's present victims. They would not only know exactly how far to go with safety, but also how at once to recede. To offer, for instance, two pieces of muffin firmly and decidedly with the right hand would probably make up for offering one flower with the left, at least if there were no guardian or chaperon on the spot to take instant advantage of the first overture. But it would now perhaps be premature to enter into the details of a system which it may take a generation or so more of match-making to introduce.

WOMEN'S HEROINES. [128]

A vigorous and pertinacious effort has of late years been made to persuade mankind that beauty in women is a matter of very little moment. As long as literature was more or less a man's vocation, an opposite tendency prevailed; and a successful novelist would as soon have thought of flying as of driving a team of ugly heroines through three volumes. The rapid and portentous increase of authoresses changed the current of affairs. As a rule, authoresses do not care much about lovely women; and they must naturally despise the miserable masculine weakness which is led captive by a pretty face, even if it be only upon paper. They can have no patience with such feebleness, and it may well seem to them to be a high and important mission to help to put it down.

It became, accordingly, the fashion at one time among the feminine writers of fiction to make all their fascinating heroines plain girls with plenty of soul, and to show, by a series of thrilling love adventures, how completely in the long run the plain girls had the best of it. There is a regular type of ideal young lady in women's novels, to which we have at last become accustomed. She is not at all a perfect beauty. Her features are not as finely chiseled as a Greek statue; she is taller, [129]
we are invariably told, than the model height, her nose is *retroussé*; and "in some lights" an unfavorable critic might affirm that her hair was positively tawny. But there is a well of feeling in her big brown eyes, which, when united to genius, invariably bowls over the hero of the book. And the passion she excites is of that stirring kind which eclipses all others.

Through the first two volumes the predestined lover flirts with the beauties who despise her, dances with them under her eye, and wears their colors in her presence. But at the end of the

third an expressive glance tells her that all is right, and that big eyes and a big soul have won the race in a canter. Jane Eyre was perhaps the first triumphant success of this particular school of art. And Jane Eyre certainly opened the door to a long train of imitators. For many years every woman's novel had got in it some dear and noble creature, generally underrated, and as often as not in embarrassed circumstances, who used to capture her husband by sheer force of genius, and by pretending not to notice him when he came into the room. Some pleasant womanly enthusiasts even went further, and invented heroines with tangled hair and inky fingers. We do not feel perfectly certain that Miss Yonge, for instance, has not married her inky Minervas to nicer and more pious husbands, as a rule, than her uninky ones. The advantage of the view that ugly heroines are the most charming is obvious, if only the world could be brought to adopt it. It [130] is a well-meant protest in favor of what may be called, in these days of political excitement, the "rights" of plain girls. It is very hard to think that a few more freckles or a quarter of an inch of extra chin should make all the difference in life to women, and those of them who are intellectually fitted to play a shining part in society or literature may be excused for rebelling against the masculine heresy of believing in beauty only.

Whenever such women write, the constant moral they preach to us is that beauty is a delusion and a snare. This is the moral of Hetty in *Adam Bede*, and it is in the unsympathetic and cold way in which Hetty is described that one catches glimpses of the sex of the consummate author of the story. She is quite alive to Hetty's plump arms and pretty cheeks. She likes to pat her and watch her, as if Hetty were a cat, or some other sleek and supple animal. But we feel that the writer of *Adam Bede* is eyeing Hetty all over from the beginning to the end, and considering in herself the while what fools men are. It would be unjust and untrue to say that George Eliot in all her works does not do ample justice, in a noble and generous way, to the power of female beauty. The heroines of *Romola* and *Felix Holt* prove distinctly that she does. But one may fairly doubt whether a man could have painted Hetty. When one sees the picture, one understands its truth; but men who draw pretty faces usually do so with more enthusiasm.

A similar sort of protest may be found lurking in a great many women's novels against the [131] popular opinion that man is the more powerful animal, and that a wife is at best a domestic appanage of the husband. Authoresses are never weary of attempts to set this right. They like to prove, what is continually true, that feminine charms are the lever that moves the world, and that the ideal woman keeps her husband and all about her straight. In religious novels woman's task is to exercise the happiest influence on the man's theological opinions. Owing to the errors he has imbibed from the study of a false and shallow philosophy, he sees no good in going to church twice on Sundays, or feels that he cannot heartily adopt all the expressions in the Athanasian creed. It is the heroine's mission to cure this mental malady; to point out to him, from the impartial point of view of those who have never committed the folly of studying Kant or Hegel, how thoroughly superficial Kant and Hegel are; and to remind him by moonlight, and in the course of spiritual flirtation on a balcony, of the unutterable truths in theology which only a woman can naturally discern. We are far from wishing to intimate that there is not a good deal of usefulness in such feminine points of view. The *argumentum ad sexum*, if not a logical, is often no doubt a practical one, and women are right to employ it whenever they can make it tell. And as it would be impossible to develop it to any considerable extent in a dry controversial work, authoresses have no other place to work it in except in a romance. What they do for religion in pious novels, they do for other things in productions of a more strictly secular kind. [132]

There is, for instance, a popular and prevalent fallacy that women ought to be submissive to, and governed by, their lords and masters. In feminine fiction we see a very wholesome reaction against this mistaken supposition. The hero of the female tale is often a poor, frivolous, easily led person. When he can escape from his wife's eye, he speculates heavily on Stock Exchange, goes in under the influence of evil advisers for any sort of polite swindling, and forgets, or is ill-tempered towards, the inestimable treasure he has at home. On such occasions the heroine of the feminine novel shines out in all her majesty. She is kind and patient to her husband's faults, except that when he is more than usually idiotic her eyes flash, and her nostrils dilate with a sort of grand scorn, while her knowledge of life and business is displayed at critical moments to save him from ruin. When every one else deserts him, she takes a cab into the city, and employs some clever friend, who has always been hopelessly in love with her—and for whom she entertains, unknown to her husband, a Platonic brotherly regard—to intervene in the nick of time, and to arrest her husband's fall.

In a story called *Sowing the Wind*, which has recently been published, the authoress (for we assume, in spite of the ambiguous assertion on the title-page, that the pen which wrote it was not really a man's) goes to very great lengths. The hero, St. John Aylott, is always snubbing and lecturing Isola, whom he married when she was half a child, and whom he treats as a child long [133] after she has become a great and glorious woman. He administers the doctrine of conjugal authority to her in season and out of season, and his object is to convert her into a loving feminine slave. Against this revolting theory her nature rebels. Though she preserves her wifely attachment to a man whom she has once thought worthy of better things, her respect dies away, and at last she openly defies him when he wants her, in contravention of her plain duty, not to adopt as her son a deserted orphan-boy. At this point her character stands out in noble contrast to his. She does adopt the boy, and brings him to live with her in spite of all; and when St. John is unnaturally peevish at its childish squalling, Isola bears his fretful animadversions with a patient dignity that touches the hearts of all about her.

Any husband who can go on preaching about conjugal obedience through three volumes to a

splendid creature who is his wife, must have something wrong about his mind. And something wrong about St. John's mind there ultimately proves to be. It flashes across Isola that this is the case, and before long her worst suspicions are confirmed. At last St. John breaks out into open lunacy, and dies deranged—a fate which is partly the cause, and partly the consequence, of his continual indulgence in such wild theories about the relations of man and wife. It is not every day that we have the valuable lesson of the rights of wives so plainly or so practically put before us, [134] but when it is put before us, we recognize the service that may be conferred on literature and society by lady authors. To assert the great cause of the independence of the female sex is one of the ends of feminine fiction, just as the assertion of the rights of plain girls is another. Authoresses do not ask for what Mr. Mill wishes them to have—a vote for the borough, or perhaps a seat in Parliament. They do ask that young women should have a fair matrimonial chance, independently of such trivial considerations as good looks, and that after marriage they should have the right to despise their husbands whenever duty and common sense tell them it is proper to do so.

The odd thing is that the heroines of whom authoresses are so fond in novels, are not the heroines whom other women like in real life. Even the popular authoresses of the day, who are always producing some lovely pantheress in their stories, and making her achieve an endless series of impossible exploits, would not care much about a lovely pantheress in a drawing-room or a country-house; and are not perhaps in the habit of meeting any. The fact is that the vast majority of women who write novels do not draw upon their observation for their characters so much as upon their imagination. In some respects this is curious enough, for when women observe, they observe acutely and to a good deal of purpose. Those of them, however, who take to the manufacture of fiction have generally done so because at some portion of their career they have been thrown back upon themselves. They began perhaps to write when circumstances made [135] them feel isolated from the rest of their little world, and in a spirit of sickly concentration upon their own thoughts.

A woman with a turn for literary work who notices that she is distanced, as far as success or admiration goes, by rivals inferior in mental capacity to herself, flies eagerly to the society of her own fancies, and makes her pen her greatest friend. It is the lot of many girls to pass their childhood or youth in a somewhat monotonous round of domestic duties, and frequently in a narrow domestic circle, with which, except from natural affection, they may have no great intellectual sympathy. The stage of intellectual fever through which able men have passed when they were young is replaced, in the case of girls of talent, by a stage of moral morbidity. At first this finds vent in hymns, and it turns in the end to novels. Few clever young ladies have not written religious poetry at one period or other of their history, and few that have done so, stop there without going further. It is a great temptation to console oneself for the shortcomings of the social life around, by building up an imaginary picture of social life as it might be, full of romantic adventures and pleasant conquests.

In manufacturing her heroines, the young recluse author puts on paper what she would herself like to be, and what she thinks she might be if only her eyes were bluer, her purse longer, or men more wise and discerning. In painting the slights offered to her favorite ideal, she conceives the slights that might possibly be offered to herself, and the triumphant way in which she would [136] (under somewhat more auspicious circumstances) delight to live them down and trample them under foot. The vexations and the annoyances she describes with considerable spirit and accuracy. The triumph is the representation of her own delicious dreams. The grand character of the imaginary victim is but a species of phantom of her ownself, taken, like the German's camel, from the depths of her own self-consciousness, and projected into cloudland. This is the reason why authoresses enjoy dressing up a heroine who is ill-used. They know the sensation of social martyrdom, and it is a gentle sort of revenge upon the world to publish a novel about an underrated martyr, whose merits are recognised in the end, either before or after her decease. They are probably not conscious of the precise work they are performing. They are not aware that their heroine represents what they believe they themselves would prove to be under impossible circumstances, provided they had only golden hair and a wider sphere of action.

This is but another and a larger phase of a phenomenon which all of us have become familiar with who have ever had a large acquaintance with young ladies' poems. They all write about death with a pertinacity that is positively astounding. It is not that the young people actually want to die. But they like the idea that their family circle will find out, when it is too late, all the mistakes and injustices it has committed towards them, and that this world will perceive that it has been entertaining unawares an angel, just as the angel has taken flight upwards to another. [137] The juvenile aspirant commences with revenging her wrongs in heaven, but it occurs to her before long that she can with equal facility have them revenged upon earth. Poetry gives way to prose, and hymnology to fiction. The element of self-consciousness, unknown to herself, still continues to prevail, and to color the character of the heroines she turns out. Of course great authoresses shake themselves free from it. Real genius is independent of sex, and first-rate writers, whether they are men or women, are not morbidly in love with an idealized portrait of themselves.

But the poorer or less worthy class of feminine novelists seldom escape from the fatal influence of egotism. Women's heroines, except in the case of the best artists, are conceptions borrowed, not from without, but from within. The consequence is that there is a sameness about them which becomes at last distasteful. The conception of the injured wife or the glorified governess is one which was a novelty fifteen or twenty years ago, while it cannot be said any longer to be lively or

entertaining. As literature has grown to be a woman's occupation, we are afraid that glorified governesses in fiction will, like the poor, be always with us, and continue to the end to run their bright course of universal victory. The most, perhaps, that can be hoped is that they will in the long run take the wind out of the sails of the glorified adulteresses and murderesses which at present seem the latest and most successful efforts of feminine art.

INTERFERENCE.

[138]

About the strongest propensity in human nature, apart from the purely personal instincts, is the propensity to interfere. Not tyranny, which is another matter—tyranny being active while interference is negative; the one standing as the masculine, the other as the feminine, form of the same principle. Besides, tyranny has generally some personal gain in view when it takes in hand to force people to do what they do not like to do; while interference seeks no good for itself at all, but simply prevents the exercise of free will for the mere pleasure to be had out of such prevention. Again, the idea of tyranny is political rather than domestic, but the curse of interference is seen most distinctly within the four walls of home, where also it is felt the most. Very many people spend their lives in interfering with others—perpetually putting spokes into wheels with which they have really nothing to do, and thrusting their fingers into pies about the baking of which they are not in any way concerned; and of these people we are bound to confess that women make up the larger number and are the greater sinners.

To be sure there are some men—small, fussy, finicking fellows, with whom nature has made the irreparable blunder of sex—who are as troublesome in their endless interference as the [139] narrowest-minded and most meddling women of their acquaintance; but the feminine characteristics of men are so exceptional that we need not take them into serious calculation. For the most part, when men do interfere in any manly sense at all, it is with such things as they think they have a right to control—say, with the wife's low dresses, or the daughter's too patent flirtations. They interfere and prevent because they are jealous of the repute, perhaps of the beauty, of their womankind; and knowing what men say of such displays, or fearing their effect, they stand between folly and slander to the best of their ability. But this kind of interference, noble or ignoble as the cause may be, comes into another class of motives altogether, and does not belong to the kind of interference of which we are speaking.

Women, then, are the great interferers at home, both with each other and with men. They do not tell us what we are to do, beyond going to church and subscribing to their favorite mission, so much as they tell us what we are not to do; they do not command so much as they forbid; and, of all women, wives and daughters are the most given to handling these check-strings and putting on these drag-chains. Sisters, while young, are obliged to be less interfering, under pain of a perpetual round of bickering; for brothers are not apt to submit to the counsel of creatures for the most part as loftily snubbed as sisters are; while mothers are nine times out of ten laid aside for all but sentimental purposes, so soon as the son has ceased to be a boy and has learned to [140] become a man. The queenhood, therefore, of personal and domestic interference lies with wives, and they know how to use the prerogative they assume.

Take an unlucky man who smokes under protest, his wife not liking to forbid the pleasure entirely, but always grudging it, and interfering with its exercise. Each segar represents a battle, deepening in intensity according to the number. The first may have been had with only a light skirmish perhaps, perhaps a mere threatening of an attack that passed away without coming to actual onslaught; the second brings up the artillery; while the third or fourth lets all the forces loose, and sets the biggest guns thundering. She could understand a man smoking one segar in the day, she says, with a gracious condescension to masculine weakness; but when it comes to more she feels that she is called on to interfere, and to do her best towards checking such a reprehensible excess. It does not weaken her position that she knows nothing of what she is talking about. She never smoked a segar herself, and therefore does not understand the uses or the abuses of tobacco; but she holds herself pledged to interfere as soon as she gets the chance, and she redeems the pledge with energy.

The man too, who has the stomach of an ostrich and an appetite to correspond, but about whom the home superstition is that he has a feeble digestion and must take care of his diet, has also to run the gauntlet of his wife's interfering forces. He never dines or sups jollily with his friends without being plucked at and reminded that salmon always disagrees with him; that champagne [141] is sure to give him a headache to-morrow; and "My dear! when you know how bad salad is for you!" or, "How can you eat that horrid pastry! You will be so ill in the night!" "What! more wine? another glass of whisky? how foolish you are! how wrong!" The wife has a nervous organization which cannot bear stimulants; the husband is a strong large-framed man who can drink deep without feeling it; but to the excitable woman her feeble limit is her husband's measure, and as soon as he has gone beyond the range of her own short tether, she trots after him remonstrating, and thinks herself justified in interfering with his progress. For women cannot be brought to understand the capacities of a man's life; they cannot be made to understand that what is bad for themselves may not be bad for others, and that their weakness ought not to be the gauge of a man's strength.

A pale chilly woman afflicted with chronic bronchitis, who wears furs and velvets in May and

fears the east wind as much as an East-Indian fears a tiger, does her best to coddle her husband, father, and sons in about the same ratio as she coddles herself. They must not go out without an overcoat; they must be sure to take an umbrella if the day is at all cloudy; they must not walk too far, nor ride too hard, and they must be sure to be at home by a certain hour. When such women as these have to do with men just on the boundary-line between the last days of vigor and the first of old age, they put forward the time of old age by many years. One sees their men rapidly [142] sink into the softness and incapacity of senility, when a more bracing life would have kept them good for half-a-dozen years longer. But women do not care for this. They like men to be their own companions more than they care for any manly comradeship among each other; and most women —but not all—would rather have their husbands manly in a womanly way than in a manly one, as being more within the compass of their own sympathies and understanding.

The same kind of interference is very common where the husband is a man of broad humor—one who calls a spade a spade, with no circumlocution about an agricultural implement. The wife of such a man is generally one of the ultra-refined kind, according to the odd law of compensation which regulates so much of human action, and thinks herself obliged to stand as the enduring censor of her husband's speech. As this is an example most frequently to be found in middle life, and where there are children belonging to the establishment, the word of warning is generally "papa!"—said with reproach or resentment, according to circumstances—which has, of course, the effect of drawing the attention of the young people to the paternal breadth of speech, and of fixing that special breach of decorum on their memory. Sometimes the wife has sufficient self-restraint not to give the word of warning in public, but can nurse her displeasure for a more convenient season; but as soon as they are alone, the miserable man has to pass under the [143] harrow, as only husbands with wives of a chastising spirit can pass under it, and his life is made a burden to him because of that unlucky anecdote told with such verve a few hours ago, and received with such shouts of pleasant laughter. Perhaps the anecdote was just a trifle doubtful; granted; but what does the wife take by her remonstrance? Most probably a quarrel; possibly a good-natured *peccavi* for the sake of being let off the continuance of the sermon; perhaps a yawn; most certainly not reform. If the man is a man of free speech and broad humor by nature and liking, he will remain so to the end; and what the censorship of society leaves untouched, the interference of a wife will not control.

Children come in for an enormous share of interference, which is not direction, not discipline, but simple interference for its own sake. There are mothers who meddle with every expression of individuality in their young people, quite irrespective of moral tendency, or whether the occasion is trivial or important. In the fancies, the pleasures, the minor details of dress in their children, there is always that intruding maternal finger upsetting the arrangements of the poor little pie as vigorously as if thrones and altars depended on the result. Not a game of croquet can be begun, nor a blue ribbon worn instead of a pink one, without maternal interference; so that the bloom is rubbed off every enjoyment, and life becomes reduced to a kind of goose-step, with mamma for the drill-sergeant prescribing the inches to be marked. Sisters, too, do a great deal of this kind of thing among each other; as all those who are intimate where there are large families of [144] unmarried girls must have seen. The nudges, the warning looks, the deprecating "Amies!" and "Oh Lucies!" and "Hush Roses!" by which some seek to act as household police over the others, are patent to all who use their senses.

In some houses the younger sisters seem to have been born chiefly as training grounds for the elders, whereon they may exercise their powers of interference; and a hard time they have of it. If Emma goes to her embroidery, Ellen tells her she ought to practice her singing; if Jane is reading, Mary recommends sewing as a more profitable use of precious time; if Amy is at her easel, Ada wants to turn her round to the piano. It is quite the exception where four or five sisters leave each other free to do as each likes, and do not take to drilling and interference as part of the daily programme. Something of the reluctance to domestic service so painfully apparent among the better class of working women is due to this spirit of interference with women. The lady who wrote about the caps and gowns of servant-girls, and drew out a plan of dress, down to the very material of their gloves, was an instance of this spirit. For, when we come to analyse it, what does it really signify to us how our servants dress, so long as they are clean and decent, and do not let their garments damage our goods? Fashion is almost always ridiculous, and women as a rule care more for dress than they care for anything else; and if the kitchen apes the parlor, [145] and Phyllis gives as much thought to her new linsey as my lady gives to her new velvet, we cannot wonder at it, nor need we hold up our hands in horror at the depravity of the smaller person. Does one flight of stairs transpose morality? If it does not, there is no real ethical reason why my lady should interfere with poor Phyllis's enjoyment in her ugly vanities, when she herself will not be interfered with, though press and pulpit both try to turn her out of her present path into one that all ages have thought the best for her, and the one divinely appointed. It is a thing that will not bear reasoning on, being simply a form of the old "who will guard the guardian?" Who will direct the directress? and to whose interference will the interferer submit?

There are two causes for this excessive love of interference among women. The one is the narrowness of their lives and objects, by which insignificant things gain a disproportionate value in their eyes; the other, their belief that they are the only saviors of society, and that without them man would become hopelessly corrupt. And to a certain extent this belief is true, but surely with restrictions. Because the clearer moral sense and greater physical weakness of women restrain men's fiercer passions, and force them to be gentle and considerate, women are not, therefore, the sole arbiters of masculine life, into whose hands is given the paying out of just so much rope as they think fit for the occasion. They would do better to look to their own tackle

before settling so exactly the run of others'; and if ever their desired time of equality is to come, it must come through mutual independence, not through womanly interference, and as much liberality and breadth must be given as is demanded—which, so far as humanity has gone hitherto, has not been the feminine manner of squaring accounts. [146]

Grant that women are the salt of the earth, and the great antiseptic element in society, still that does not reduce everything else to the verge of corruption which they alone prevent. Yet by their lives they evidently think that it is so, and that they are each and all the keepers of keys which give them a special entrance to the temple of morality, and by which they are able to exclude or admit the grosser body of men. Hence they interfere and restrict and pay out just so much rope, and measure off just so much gambolling ground, as they think fit; they think vile man a horribly wicked invention when he takes things into his own hand, and goes beyond their boundary-lines. It is all done in good if in a very narrow faith—that we admit willingly; but we would call their attention to the difference there is between influence and interference, which is just the difference between their ideal duty and their daily practice—between being the salt of the earth and the blister of the home. We think it only justice to put in a word for those poor henpecked fellows of husbands at a time when the whole cry is for Woman's Rights, which seems to mean chiefly her right of making man knuckle under on all occasions, and of making one will serve for two lives. We assure her that she would get her own way in large matters much more easily if she would leave men more liberty in small ones, and not teaze them by interfering in things which do not concern her, and have only reference to themselves. [147]

PLAIN GIRLS. [148]

It is beyond all question the tendency of modern society to regard marriage as the great end and justification of a woman's life. This is perhaps the single point on which practical and romantic people, who differ in so many things, invariably agree. Poets, novelists, natural philosophers, fashionable and unfashionable mothers, meet one another on the broad common ground of approving universal matrimony; and women from their earliest years are dedicated to the cultivation of those feminine accomplishments which are supposed either to be most seductive before marriage in a drawing-room, or most valuable after marriage in the kitchen and housekeeper's-room.

It is admitted to be a sort of half necessity in any interesting work of fiction that its plots, its adventures, and its catastrophes should all lead up to the marriage of the principal young lady. Sometimes, as in the case of the celebrated Lilly Dale, the public tolerates a bold exception to the ordinary rule, on account of the extreme piquancy of the thing; but no wise novelist ventures habitually to disregard the prevalent opinion that the heroine's mission is to become a wife before the end of the third volume. The one ideal, accordingly, which romance has to offer woman is marriage; and most novels thus make life end with what really is only its threshold and beginning. The Bible no doubt says that it is not good for man to live alone. What the Bible says of man, public opinion as unhesitatingly asserts of woman; and a text that it is not good for woman to live alone either, though not canonical, is silently added by all domestic commentators to the Scriptural original. [149]

Those who pretend to be best acquainted with the order of nature and the mysterious designs of Providence assure us with confidence that all this is as it should be; that woman is not meant to grow and flourish singly, but to hang on man, and to depend on him, like the vine upon the elm. If we remember right, M. Comte entertains opinions which really come to pretty much the same thing. Woman is to be maintained in ease and luxury by the rougher male animal, it being her duty in return to keep his spiritual nature up to the mark, to quicken and to purify his affections, to be a sort of drawing-room religion in the middle of every-day life, to serve as an object of devotion to the religious Comtist, and to lead him through love of herself up to the love of humanity in the abstract.

One difficulty presented by this matrimonial view of woman's destiny is to know what, under the present conditions in which society finds itself placed, is to become of plain girls. Their mission is a subject which no philosopher as yet has adequately handled. If marriage is the object of all feminine endeavors and ambitions, it certainly seems rather hard that Providence should have condemned plain girls to start in the race at such an obvious disadvantage. Even under M. Comte's system, which provides for almost everything, and which, in its far-sightedness and thoughtfulness for our good, appears almost more benevolent than Providence, it would seem as if hardly sufficient provision had been made for them. [150]

It must be difficult for any one except a really advanced Comtist to give himself up to the worship of a thoroughly plain girl. Filial instinct might enable us to worship her as a mother, but even the noblest desire to serve humanity would scarcely be enough to keep a husband or a lover up to his daily devotions in the case of a plain girl with sandy hair and a freckled complexion. The boldest effort to rectify the inequalities of the position of plain girls has been made of late years by a courageous school of female writers of fiction. Everything has been done that could be done to persuade mankind that plain girls are in reality by far the most attractive of the lot. The clever authoress of "Jane Eyre" nearly succeeded in the forlorn attempt for a few years; and plain girls, with volumes of intellect speaking through their deep eyes and from their massive foreheads,

seemed for a while, on paper at least, to be carrying everything before them.

The only difficulty was to get the male sex to follow out in practice what they so completely admired in Miss Bronté's three-volume novels. Unhappily, the male sex, being very imperfect and frail, could not be brought to do it. They recognized the beauty of the conception about plain [151] girls, they were very glad to see them married off in scores to heroic village doctors, and they quite admitted that occasional young noblemen might be represented in fiction as becoming violently attached to young creatures with inky fingers and remarkable minds.

But no real change was brought about in ordinary life. Man, sinful man, read with pleasure about the triumphs of the sandy-haired girls, but still kept on dancing with and proposing to the pretty ones. And at last authoresses were driven back on the old standard of beauty. At present, in the productions both of masculine and feminine workmanship, the former view of plain girls has been resumed. They are allowed, if thoroughly excellent in other ways, to pair off with country curates and with devoted missionaries; but the prizes of fiction, as well as the prizes of reality, fall to the lot of their fairer and more fortunate sisters.

Champions of plain girls are not, however, wanting who boldly take the difficulty by the horns, and deny *in toto* the fact that in matrimony and love the race is usually to the beautiful. Look about you, they tell us, in the world, and you will as often as not find beauties fading on their stalks, and plain girls marrying on every side of them. And no doubt plain girls do marry very frequently. Nobody, for instance, with half an eye can fail to be familiar with the phenomenon, in his own circle, of astonishingly ugly married women. It does not, however, follow that plain girls are not terribly weighted in the race.

There are several reasons why women who rely on their beauty remain unmarried at the last, but [152] the reason that their beauty gives them no advantage is certainly not one. The first reason perhaps is that beauties are inclined to be fastidious and capricious. They have no notion of following the advice of Mrs. Hannah More, and being contented with the first good, sensible, Christian lover who falls in their way; and they run, in consequence, no slight risk of overstaying their market. They go in for a more splendid sort of matrimonial success, and think they can afford to play the more daring game.

Plain girls are providentially preserved from these temptations. At the close of a well-spent life they can conscientiously look back on a career in which no reasonable opportunity was neglected, and say that they have not broken many hearts, or been sinfully and distractingly particular. And there is the further consideration to be remembered in the case of plain girls, that fortune and rank are nearly as valuable articles as beauty, and lead to a fair number of matrimonial alliances. The system of Providence is full of kindly compensations, and it is a proof of the universal benevolence we see about us that so many heiresses should be plain. Plain girls have a right to be cheered and comforted by the thought. It teaches them the happy lesson that beauty, as compared with a settled income, is skin-deep and valueless; and that what man looks for in the companion of his life is not so much a bright cheek or a blue eye, as a substantial and useful amount of this world's wealth.

Plain girls again expect less, and are prepared to accept less, in a lover. Everybody knows the [153] sort of useful, admirable, practical man who sets himself to marry a plain girl. He is not a man of great rank, great promise, or great expectations. Had it been otherwise, he might possibly have flown at higher game, and set his heart on marrying female loveliness rather than homely excellence. His choice, if it is nothing else, is an index of a contented and modest disposition. He is not vain enough to compete in the great race for beauties. What he looks for is some one who will be the mother of his children, who will order his servants duly, and keep his household bills; and whose good sense will teach her to recognise the sterling qualities of her husband, and not object to his dining daily in his slippers. This is the sort of partner that plain girls may rationally hope to secure, and who can say that they ought not to be cheerful and happy in their lot? For a character of this undeniable sobriety there is indeed a positive advantage in a plain girl as a wife. It should never be forgotten that the man who marries a plain girl never need be jealous. He is in the Arcadian and fortunate condition of a lover who has no rivals. A sensible unambitious nature will recognize in this a solid benefit. Plain girls rarely turn into frisky matrons, and this fact renders them peculiarly adapted to be the wives of dull and steady mediocrity.

Lest it should be supposed that the above calculation of what plain girls may do leaves some of their power and success still unaccounted for, it is quite right and proper to add that the story of [154] plain girls, if it were carefully written, would contain many instances, not merely of moderate good fortunes, but of splendid and exceptional triumph. Like *prima donnas*, opera-dancers, and lovely milliners, plain girls have been known to make extraordinary hits, and to awaken illustrious passions. Somebody ought to take up the subject in a book, and tell us how they did it.

This is the age of Golden Treasuries. We have Golden Treasuries of English poets, of French poets, of great lawyers, of famous battles, of notable beauties, of English heroes, of successful merchants, and of almost every sort of character and celebrity that can be conceived. What is wanted is a Golden Treasury containing the narrative of the most successful plain girls. This book might be called the Book of Ugliness, and we see no reason why, to give reality to the story, the portraits of some of the most remarkable might not be appended. Of course, if ever such a volume is compiled, it will be proved to demonstration that plain girls have before now arrived at great matrimonial honor and renown.

There is, for example, the sort of plain girl who nurses her hero (perhaps in the Crimea) through

a dangerous attack of illness, and marries him afterwards. There is the class of those who have been married simply from a sense of duty. There is the class that distinguishes itself by profuse kindness to poor cottagers, and by reading the Bible to blind old women; an occupation which as we know, from the most ordinary works of fiction, leads directly to the promptest and speediest [155] attachments on the part of the young men who happen to drop in casually at the time. The catalogue of such is perhaps long and famous. Yet, allowing for all these, allowing for everything else that can be adduced in their favor, we cannot help returning to the position that plain girls have an up-hill battle to fight. No doubt it ought not to be so.

Cynics tell us that six months after a man is married it makes very little difference to him whether his wife's nose is Roman, aquiline, or retroussé; and this may be so. The unfortunate thing is that most men persist in marrying for the sake of the illusion of the first six months, and under the influence of the ante-nuptial and not the post-nuptial sentiments; and as the first six months with a plain girl are confessedly inferior in attraction, the inference is clear that they do in effect attract less. Plainness or loveliness apart, a very large number of womankind have no reason to expect any very happy chance in married life; and if marriage is to be set before all women as the one ideal, a number of feminine lives will always turn out to have been failures.

It may be said that it is hopeless to attempt on this point to alter the sentiments of the female sex, or indeed the general verdict of society. We do not quite see the hopelessness. A considerable amount of the matrimonial ideas of young women are purely the result of their education, and of the atmosphere in which they have been brought up; and, by giving a new direction to their early training, it might not be altogether so quixotical to believe that we should [156] alter all that is the result of the training. At any rate it has become essential for the welfare of women that they should, as far as possible, be taught that they may have a career open to them even if they never marry; and it is the duty of society to try to open to them as many careers of the sort as are not incompatible with the distinctive peculiarities of a woman's physical capacity.

It may well be that society's present instincts as regards woman are at bottom selfish. The notion of feminine dependence on man, of the want of refinement in a woman who undertakes any active business or profession, and of the first importance of woman's domestic position, when carried to an extreme, are perhaps better suited to the caprice and fanciful fastidiousness of men than to the real requirements, in the present age, of the other sex. The throng of semi-educated authoresses who are now flocking about the world of letters is a wholesome protest against such exclusive jealousy. The real objection to literary women is that women, with a few notable exceptions, are not yet properly educated to write well, or to criticise well what others write. Remove this objection by improving the curriculum of feminine education, and there is hardly any other. There is none certainly of sufficient consequence to outweigh the real need which is felt of giving those women something to live for (apart from and above ordinary domestic and philanthropic duties), whose good or evil fortune it is not to be marked out by Heaven for a married life.

A WORD FOR FEMALE VANITY. [157]

If any human weakness has a right to complain of the ingratitude with which the world treats it, it is certainly vanity. It gets through more good work, and yet comes in for more hearty abuse, than all our other weaknesses put together. Preachers and moralists are always having hits at it, and in that philosophical study and scientific vivisection of character which two friends are always so ready to practice at the expense of a third, and which weak-minded people confound with scandal, to no foible is the knife so pitilessly applied as to vanity. What makes this rigor seem all the more cruel and unnatural is that vanity never gets so little quarter as from those who ought, one would think, to be on the best possible terms with her. She is never justified of her children, and, like Byron's unhappy eagle, "nurses the pinion that impels the steel" against her. Yet it is difficult to see how the world could get on without the weakness thus universally assailed, and what preachers and moralists would do if they had their own way.

In the more important—or, we should rather say, in the larger—concerns of life vanity could perhaps be dispensed with. Where there is much at stake, other agencies come into play to keep the machinery of the world in motion, though, even as regards these, it is a question how many [158] great poems, great speeches, great actions, which have profoundly influenced the destinies of mankind, would have been lost to the world if there had been none but great motives at work to produce them. Great motives usually get the credit—that is, when we are dealing with historical characters, not dissecting a friend, in whose case it is necessary to guard against our natural proneness to partiality; but little motives often do the largest share of the work. It is proper, for instance, and due to our own dignity and self-respect to say, that the world owes *Childe Harold* to a great poet's inspired yearning for immortality. Still, we fear, there is room for a doubt whether the world would ever have seen *Childe Harold* if the great poet had not happened to be also a morbidly vain and, in some respects, remarkably small man. But even if we assume that the big affairs of life may be left to big motives, and do not require such a little motive as vanity to help them, these are, after all, few and far between.

For one action that may safely be left to yearnings for immortality, or ambition, or love, or something equally lofty and grand, there are thousands which society must get done somehow,

and which it gets done pleasantly and comfortably only because, by a charmingly convenient illusion, the vanity of each agent makes him attach a peculiar importance to them. There is no act so trivial, or to all appearance so unworthy of a rational being, that the magic of vanity cannot [159] throw a halo of dignity over it, and persuade the agent that it is mainly by his exertions that society is kept together, as Molière's dancing-master reasoned that the secret of good government is the secret of good dancing—namely, how to avoid false steps. And it is this genial promoter of human happiness, this all-powerful diffuser of social harmony, this lubricating oil without which the vast and complex machinery of life could never work, that man, in his ignorant ingratitude, dares to denounce.

We should like to ask one of these thoughtless revilers of vanity whether it has ever been his misfortune to meet a woman without it. He would probably try to escape by declaring that a woman without vanity is a purely imaginary being, if not a contradiction in terms; and we admit that there is something to be said in favor of this view. Nothing is more astonishing to the male philosopher than the odd way in which, from some stray corner of character where he would have least thought of looking for it, female vanity now and then suddenly pops out upon him. He fancied that he knew a woman well, that he had studied her character and mastered all its strong and weak points, when, by some accident or at some unguarded moment, he suddenly strikes a rich, deep, vein of vanity of the existence of which he never had the remotest suspicion. He may perhaps have known that she was not without vanity on certain points, but for these he had discovered, or had fancied he had discovered, some sort of reason. We do not necessarily mean, by reason, any cause that seemed to justify or, on any consistent principle, to account for the [160] fact. As we have already remarked, it is the peculiarity of vanity that it often flourishes most vigorously, and puts forth a plentiful crop, where there does not seem to be even a layer of soil for it.

Both men and women are occasionally most vain of their weakest points, perhaps by a merciful provision of nature similar to that by which a sow always takes most kindly to the weakest pig in the litter. Lord Chesterfield, when paternally admonishing his son as to the proper management of women, lays down as a general indisputable axiom that they are all, as a matter of course, to be flattered to the top of their bent; but he adds, as a special rule, that a very pretty or a very ugly woman should be flattered, not about her personal charms, but about her mental powers. It is only in the case of a moderately good-looking woman that the former should be singled out for praise. A very pretty woman takes her beauty as a matter of course, and would rather be flattered about the possession of some advantage to which her claim is not so clear, while a very ugly woman distrusts the sincerity of flattery about her person.

It is not without the profoundest diffidence that we venture to dispute the opinion of such an authority on such a subject as Lord Chesterfield, but still we think that no woman is so hideous that she may not, if her vanity happens to take this turn, be told with perfect safety that she is a beauty. Her vanity is, indeed, not so likely to take this turn as it would be if she were really pretty. She will probably plume herself upon her abilities or accomplishments, and therefore [161] Chesterfield's excellent fatherly advice was, on the whole, tolerably safe. But still, if any hereditary bias or unlucky accident—such, for instance, as that of being brought up among people with whom brains are nothing, and beauty everything—does give an ugly woman's vanity an impulse in the direction of good looks, no excess of hideousness makes it unsafe to extol her beauty. On the contrary, she is more likely to be imposed upon than a moderately good-looking woman, from her greater eagerness to clutch at every straw that may help to keep up the darling delusion. No philosopher is, accordingly, surprised at finding that a woman is vain where he can discover not the slightest rational foundation even for female vanity.

But it certainly is surprising, now and then, to find how long the most intense female vanity will lie, in some out-of-the-way corner of character, hidden from the eye. Perhaps we ought to say, the male eye, for women seem to discover each other's weak points by a power of intuition that amounts almost to instinct. But a man is amazed to find that a woman whose vanity he believed himself to have tracked into all its channels has it, after all, most strongly in some channel of which he previously knew nothing. He has perhaps considered her a sensible matter-of-fact woman, vain perhaps, though not unpardonably, of her capacity for business and knowledge of the world, but singularly free from the not uncommon female tendency to believe that every man who sees her is in love with her; and he unexpectedly discovers that she has for years considered [162] herself the object of a desperate passion on the part of the parish rector, a prosaic middle-aged gentleman of ample waistcoat and large family, and is a little uneasy about being left alone in the same room with the butler.

Unexpected discoveries of some such kind as this not unnaturally popularize the theory already mentioned, that such a being as a woman without vanity does not exist—that, no matter how securely the weakness may lie hidden from observation, it does somewhere or other exist, and some day will out. But we are inclined, notwithstanding, to hold that, here and there, but happily very seldom, there are to be found women really without vanity; and most unpleasant women they seem to us, as a rule, to be. They get on tolerably well with their own sex, for they are rarely pretty or affected, and they have usually certain solid, serviceable qualities which make up for not being attractive by standing wear and tear. But in their relations with men—as soon, that is, as they have secured a husband, and fascination has therefore ceased to be a matter of business, a practical question of bread-and-butter, to be grappled with in the spirit in which they would, if necessary, go out charing, or keep a mangle—they are painfully devoid of that eagerness to please and that readiness to be pleased which, in the present imperfect state of civilization, are

among woman's chief charms.

Even men cannot, as a rule, get on very well without these qualities; but still to please is not man's mission in the sense in which it is generally considered to be woman's, and probably will [163] continue to be considered, until Dr. Mary Walkers are not the exception, but the rule. One now and then has the misfortune to come upon a specimen of womanhood, good and solid enough perhaps, making a most exemplary and respectable wife and mother, but nevertheless dull, heavy, and unattractive to an extent that fills the wretched man who takes it in to dinner with desperation. And then to think that one ounce of vanity might have leavened this lump, and converted it, as by magic, into a pleasant, palatable, convivial compound, good everywhere, but especially good at the dinner-table! For, where vanity exists at all, it can scarcely fail to influence the natural desire of one sex to please the other; and a woman must be singularly devoid of all charms, physical and mental, if she fails when she is really anxious to please. That women should be fascinating, as they sometimes are, in spite of some positively painful deformity, is a proof of what such anxiety can alone accomplish.

We must admit that we have to postulate, on behalf of the female vanity whose cause we are espousing, that it should not derive its inspiration solely from self-love. However anxious a woman may be to please, if her anxiety is on her own account, and simply to secure admiration, she must be a very Helen if her vanity continues attractive. She is lucky if it does not take the most odious of all forms, and, from always revolving round self and dwelling upon selfish considerations, degenerate into a habit of perpetual postures and stage tricks to gain applause. [164] And this tendency naturally connects itself with the wish to please the opposite sex, its success being in inverse proportion to its strength. Just as one occasionally meets with men who are perfectly unaffected and sensible fellows in men's society, but whose whole demeanor becomes absurdly changed if any woman, though it be only the housemaid with a coal-scuttle, enters the room, so there are, more commonly, to be found women whose whole character seems to vary, as if by magic, according to the sex of the person whom they find themselves with. Before their own sex they are natural enough; before men they are eternally attitudinizing. We should be sorry to say that this repulsive form of vanity always takes its root in excessive self-love, but still a tinge of unselfishness seems to us the best antidote against it.

It is marvellous with how much vanity, and that too of a tolerably ostentatious kind, a woman may be thoroughly agreeable even to her own sex, if her eagerness to please is accompanied by genuine kindliness, or is free from excessive selfishness. It may be easy enough to see that all her little courtesies and attentions are at bottom really attributable to vanity; that, when she does a kind act, she is thinking less of its effect upon your comfort and happiness than of its effect upon your estimate of her character. She would perhaps rather you got half the advantage with her aid than the whole advantage without it. Her motive is, primarily, vanity—clearly not kindness—however amicably they may in general work together. But still it is the kindness that makes the [165] vanity flow into pleasant, friendly forms. In a selfish woman the very same vanity would degenerate into posturing or dressing. And, odd as it may seem, and as much as it may reflect upon the common sense of poor humanity, we believe that kind acts done out of genuine, unadulterated benevolence are less appreciated by the recipient than kind acts done out of benevolence stimulated by vanity. The latter are pleasant because they spring out of the desire to please, and soothe our self-love, whereas the former appeal to our self-interest.

There are few things in this world more charming than the kindly courtesy of a pretty woman, not ungracefully conscious of her power to please, and showing courtesy because she enjoys the exercise of this power. Strictly speaking, she is acting less in your interest than in her own. Although she feels at once the pleasure of pleasing and the pleasure of doing a kindly action, the second is quite subordinate to the first, and is perhaps, more or less, sacrificed to it. Yet who is strong-minded enough to wish that the kindliness of a pretty woman should be dictated by simple benevolence, untinged by vanity? If we knew that her kindliness arose rather from a wish to benefit us than to conciliate our good opinion, it is perhaps possible that we should esteem her more, but we fear it is quite certain that we should like her less.

Before we conclude, we ought perhaps to make one more postulate on behalf of female vanity, not less important than our postulate that it should be pleasantly tinged by unselfishness. To be [166] agreeable, it must have fair foundation. A woman may be forgiven for over-estimating her charms, but there is no forgiveness on this side of the grave for a woman who recklessly credits herself with charms that do not exist. All the lavish cheques she draws upon her male neighbor's admiration are silently dishonored, and in half an hour after the moment they sit down to table together she is a hopeless bankrupt in his estimation, even though he may have courtesy and skill enough to conceal the collapse.

As there are few, if any, pleasanter objects than a pretty woman, gracefully conscious of her beauty, and radiantly fulfilling its legitimate end, the power of pleasing, so are there few, if any, more unpleasant objects than a vain woman, ungracefully conscious of imaginary charms, and secretly disgusting those she strives to attract. An ugly woman who gives herself the airs of a beauty, or a silly woman who believes herself a genius, is not a spectacle upon which a man of healthy imagination and appetite likes to dwell. It is perhaps only in accordance with the theory that this life is a state of trial and probation that the tastes can be explained. Happily, it is not very common. Most women know their strong from their weak points, and marshal them on the whole well in the encounter with their lawful oppressor and great enemy, man. And until they have won the victory to which Dr. Mary Walker is now leading them on, may they never lack the female vanity which makes it one of their great objects in life to please!

THE ABUSE OF MATCH-MAKING. [167]

It is a pity that when, by some train of ill-luck, a word of respectable parentage, and well brought up, is led astray, it cannot adopt Goldsmith's recipe and die. It has not even the more prosaic alternative of being made an honest word by marriage, and escaping the name under which it stooped to folly, and was betrayed. It drags on a dishonored life, with little or no chance of recovering its character, inflicting cruel disgrace upon the unlucky family of ideas, no matter what their own innocence and respectability, to which it happens to belong. Thus Casuistry, if not a very useful, was at least a perfectly harmless, member of society, and moved in the best circles, until in an evil hour she became too intimate with the unpopular Jesuits.

A few years ago, when high feeding and sermonizing proved too much for the virtue of garotters, and, waxing fat, they not only kicked society, but danced hornpipes in hobnailed boots upon its head and stomach, even Philanthropy, at once the most fashionable and popular word of this century, was all but compromised by Sir Joshua Jebb and Sir George Grey. Baron Bramwell fortunately came to the rescue, and saved it from permanent loss of character. But still to this [168] day the word is sometimes used in a sense by no means complimentary. If the battue-system continues long enough, "good sport" will become a synonym for cold-blooded clumsy butchery, and thus all sport whatsoever will be more or less discredited. The *faux pas* of one member disgraces the whole family. A few men may be the lords of language, but the great majority are its slaves. They can no more disconnect the innocent idea from the soiled word that accompanies it than they can see a blue landscape through green glass. Let us hope that one of the first acts of Mr. Bright's millennial Parliament will be the establishment of a tribunal empowered to take a word when it arrives at this pitiable condition, and either in mercy knock it on the head altogether, or else formally readmit it into good society, and give it all the advantages of a fresh start.

We take an early opportunity of inviting their special attention to the much-injured word "Match-making." The practice which it describes is not only harmless, but, in the present state of society, highly useful and meritorious. Yet there can be no doubt, that there is a powerful prejudice against it. Although all women—or rather, perhaps, as Thackeray said, all good women—are at heart match-makers, there are very few who own the soft impeachment. Many repudiate it with indignation. It is on the whole about as safe to charge a lady with Fenianism as facetiously to point out a young couple in her drawing-room, whose flirtation has a suspicious businesslike look [169] about it, and to hint that she has deliberately brought them together with a view to matrimony. It may be true that she has no selfish interest whatever in the matter. The criminal conspiracy in which she so strenuously repudiates any concern is, after all, nothing worse than the attempt to make two people whom she likes, and who she thinks will suit each other, happy for life. By any other name such an action ought, one would think, to smell sweet in the nostrils of gods and men.

But, whatever the gods think of it, men cannot forget that the practice, whether harmless or not, goes by the objectionable name of match-making. So the lady replies, not, perhaps, without the energy of conscious guilt, that "things of this sort are best left to themselves," and piously begs you to remember that marriages are made in Heaven, not in her drawing-room. The melancholy truth is that the gentle craft of match-making has been so vulgarized by course and clumsy professors, and its very name has in consequence been brought into such disrepute, that few respectable women have the courage openly to recognise it. They are haunted by visions of the typical match-maker who does work for fashionable novels and social satires, and who is a truly awful personage. To her alone of mortals is it given to inspire, like the Harpies, at once contempt and fear. Keen-eyed and hook-nosed, like a bird of prey, she glowers from the corner of crowded ball-rooms upon the unconscious heir, hunts him untiringly from house to house, marries him [170] remorselessly to her eldest daughter, and then never loses sight of him till his spirit is broken, his old friends discarded, and his segar-case thrown away.

It is scarcely necessary to say that this fearful being exists only in fiction. In real life she has not only to marry her daughters, but also, like other human beings, to eat, drink, sleep, and otherwise dispose of the twenty-four hours of the day. She cannot therefore very well devote herself, from morning to night, to the one occupation of heir-hunting, with the precision of a machine, or one of Bunyan's walking vices. But still there must be some truth even in a caricature, and a man sometimes finds a girl "thrown at his head," as the process is forcibly termed, with a coarse-mindedness quite worthy of the typical match-maker, though also with a clumsiness which she would heartily despise.

He goes as a stranger to some place, and is astonished to find himself at once taken to the bosom and innermost confidence of people whose very name he never heard before, as if he were their oldest and most familiar friend. He is asked to dinner one day, to breakfast the next, and warmly assured that a place is always kept for him at lunch. Charmed and flattered to find his many merits so quickly discovered and thoroughly appreciated by strangers, he votes them the cleverest, most genial, most hospitable people he ever met; and everything goes on delightfully until he begins to think it odd that he should be constantly left alone with, and now and then delicately chaffed about, some *passée*, ill-favored woman, whom he no more connects with any [171] thought of marriage than he would a female rhinoceros. And then slowly dawns upon him the cruel truth that his kind hosts have had their appreciation of his merits considerably sharpened by the fact that there is an ugly daughter or sister-in-law in the house whom they are sick to

death of, whom they are always imploring "to marry or do something," and who, having for years ogled and angled for every marriageable pair of whiskers and pantoloons within ten miles, has gradually become so well known in the neighborhood that her one forlorn hope is to carry off some innocent stranger with a rush.

"*Quere peregrinum, vicinia rauca reclamat;*" and if the *peregrinus* happens to be young and verdant, and, having just been given a good appointment, feels, with the Vicar of Wakefield, that one of the three greatest characters on earth is the father of a family, he is possibly hooked securely before he discovers his danger. He discovers it to find himself tied for life to a woman with whom he has not a sympathy in common, and for whom every day increases his disgust. And the people who have ruined his life have not even the sorry excuse that they wished to better hers. Their one thought was to get rid of her as speedily as possible, no matter to whom; and they would rather have had Bluebeard at a two-months' engagement than any other man at one of six. There is something so coarse and revolting, so brutal, in the notion of bringing two people together into such a relation as that of marriage on purely selfish grounds, and without the [172] slightest regard to their future happiness, that any one who has seen the snare laid for himself or his friends may well shudder at the mere sound of match-making. Mezentius was more merciful, for of the two bodies which he chained together only one had life.

The clumsy match-maker is a scarcely less dangerous, though a far more respectable, enemy to the gentle craft than the coarse one. She makes it ridiculous, while the latter makes it odious, and it is ridicule that kills. She is, perhaps, a well-meaning woman, who would be sorry to marry two people unless she thought them suited to each other; but the moment she has made up her mind that they ought to marry, she sets to work with a vigor which, unless she has a very young man to deal with, is almost sure to spoil her plans. This would not be surprising in a silly woman; but it is odd that the more energetic, and, in some respects, the more able a woman is, the more likely sometimes she is to fall into this error.

A woman may be the life and soul of a dozen societies, write admirable letters, get half her male relatives into Government offices, and yet be the laughing-stock of the neighborhood for the absurd way in which she goes husband-hunting for her daughters. The very energy and ability which fit her for other pursuits disqualify her for match-making. She is too impatient and too fond of action to adopt the purely passive expectant attitude, the masterly inactivity, which is here the [173] great secret of success. She is always feeling that something should be said or done to help on the business, and prematurely scares the shy or suspicious bird. Many a promising love-affair has been nipped in the bud simply because the too eager mother has drawn public attention to it before it was robust enough to face publicity, by throwing the two lovers conspicuously together, or by some unguarded remark.

When one thinks of all that a man has to go through in the course of a love-affair—especially in a small society where everybody knows everybody—of all the chaffing and grinning, and significant interchange of glances when he picks up the daughter's fan, or hands the mother to her carriage, or laughs convulsively at the old jokes of the father, one is almost inclined to wonder how a Briton, of the average British stiffness and shyness, ever gets married at all. The explanation probably is, that he falls in love before he exactly knows what he is about, and, once in love, is of course gloriously blind and deaf to all obstacles between him and the adored one. But to subject a man to this trying ordeal, as the too eager match-maker does, before he is sufficiently in love to be proof against it, is like sending him into a snow-storm without a great-coat.

The romantic match-maker is, in her way, as mischievous as the coarse or the clumsy one. She is usually a good sort of woman, but with decidedly more heart than head. She gets her notions of political economy from Mr. Dickens' novels, and holds that, whenever two nice young people of [174] opposite sexes like each other, it is their business then and there to marry. If Providence cannot always, like Mr. Dickens, provide a rich aunt or uncle, it at least never sends mouths without hands to feed them. Let every good citizen help the young people to marry as fast as they can, and let there be lots of chubby cheeks and lots of Sunday plum-pudding to fill them. There is no arguing with a woman of this kind, and she is perhaps the most dangerous of all match-makers, inasmuch as she is usually herself a warm-hearted pleasant woman, and there is a courage and disinterestedness about her views very captivating to young heads. There is no safety but in flight. Even a bachelor of fair prudence and knowledge of the world is not safe in her hands. We mean on the assumption that he is not in a position to marry. If he is "an eligible," he cannot, of course, be considered safe anywhere. But otherwise he knows that match-makers of the unromantic worldly type will be only too glad to leave him alone.

And having, perhaps, been accustomed on this account to feel that he may flirt in moderation with impunity, as a man with whom marriage is altogether out of the question, he is quite unprepared for the new and startling unconventional view which the romantic match-maker takes of him. He is horrified to find that, ignoring the usual considerations as to the length of his purse, she has discovered that he and the pretty girl with whom he danced three consecutive dances last night must have been made expressly for each other, and that she has somehow contrived, by [175] the exercise of that freemasonry in love-affairs which is peculiar to women, to put the same ridiculous notion into the young lady's head. In fact, he suddenly finds to his astonishment that he must either propose—which is out of the question—or be considered a cold-blooded trifler with female hearts. And so he has nothing to do but pack up his portmanteau and beat an ignominious retreat, with an uncomfortable consciousness that his amiable hostess and pretty partner have a very poor opinion of him.

It is rather hard, however, that these and other abuses, which we have not space to enumerate, of the great art of match-making should bring the art itself into odium and contempt. In all of them there is a violation of some one or more of what we take to be its three chief canons. First, the objects to be experimented upon should be pecuniarily in a position to marry. Secondly, care should be taken that they seem on the whole not unlikely to suit each other. Thirdly, the artist should be content, like a photographer, to bring the objects together, and leave the rest of the work mainly to nature. We confess that we feel painfully the unscientific vagueness of this last axiom, since so much turns upon the way in which the objects are brought together. But, as we only undertook to treat of the abuse of match-making, the reader must consider these maxims for its proper use to be thrown into the bargain *gratis*, and not therefore to be scrutinized severely. Some other day, if we can muster up courage enough for so delicate and arduous a task, we may [176] perhaps attempt to show that, in the present state of society, the art of match-making deserves and requires cultivation, and how, in our humble opinion, this cultivation should be carried on.

FEMININE INFLUENCE. [177]

All English ladies who are warmly devoted to the great cause of feminine authority have got their eyes just now upon the Empress of the French. It is understood in English domestic circles that the Empress has decided to go to Rome, and that the Emperor has decided on her staying at home, and the interest of the situation is generally thought to be intense. The ocean race between the yachts was nothing to it. Every woman of spirit has been betting heavily this Christmas upon the Empress, and praying mentally for the defeat of the Emperor, and every new telegram that bears upon the subject of the difficult controversy is scanned by hundreds of dovelike eyes every morning with indescribable eagerness.

M. Reuter, who is a man probably, if he is not a joint-stock company, is believed not to be altogether an impartial historian; and it is felt in many drawing-rooms that what is wanted on this occasion, at the telegraph offices, is a sound and resolute Madame Reuter, to correct the deviations of M. Reuter's compass. In default of all trustworthy telegraphic intelligence, Englishwomen are compelled to fall back on their vivid imagination, and to construct a picture of [178] what is happening from the depths of their own moral consciousness. And several things their moral consciousness tells them are clear and certain. The first is, that the Empress Eugénie is an injured and interesting victim. She has made a vow, under the very touching circumstances of measles in the Imperial nursery, to pay a visit to the Pope; and Cabinet Ministers like M. Lavalette, who throw suspicion on the binding nature of such a holy maternal obligation, are worse than "S. G. O." In the second place, she has set her heart upon going. Even if a vow were not binding, this is. It is mere nonsense to say that her pilgrimage would interfere with politics. A woman's fine tact is often of considerable use in politics, and the sight of the Prince Imperial in his mother's arms might exercise the most beneficial influence on the Pope's mind.

Pio Nono has held out hitherto in the most inexplicable manner against the Prince Imperial's photograph, but he never could resist a sight of the original. And, thirdly, if a wife and a mother may not have her own way about going to see the Head of her own Church, when is she ever to have her way at all, and where is the line to be drawn? The next downward step in a husband's declension will be to prevent her from frequenting all religious exercises, or, still worse, from selecting her own balls and evening parties. This is what English ladies feel, and feel keenly. It is some consolation to them to learn that, if the Empress Eugénie is discomfited, she will not have been discomfited without a struggle. Of course there will be no evening reception on the New [179] Year at the Tuileries. No lady with a proper sense of what was due to her own dignity would receive under such circumstances. But till the most authentic news arrive, it will still be possible to hope and to believe that victory will eventually, and in spite of all appearances, declare itself upon the side of right and of propriety, and that her Majesty will not be interfered with merely to satisfy the idle caprices of a Foreign Office.

The question of the proper limits of feminine influence is one which such universal enthusiasm forces naturally on one's notice. Not even the most rigid cynic can deny that women ought to have some influence on the mind and judgment of the opposite sex, and the only difficulty is to know how far that influence ought to go. Every one will be ready to concede that sound reasoning is worth hearing, whether it comes from a woman or a man; and that, so far as a lady argues well, she has as much claim on our attention as Diotima had on the attention of Socrates. This, however, is not precisely the point which is so difficult to settle. The problem is to know how much influence a woman ought to have when she does not argue well; and further, what are the matters on which her opinion, whether it be based on argument or instinct, is of value.

One of the most important subjects on which women have some, and always want to have a great deal of power, is religion. This is one part of the supposed mission of the Empress upon which feminine observers look with especial sympathy, and on which experienced masculine observers, [180] on the other hand, look with some awe. The correspondents of the daily papers, whose pleasure and privilege it is to be able to instruct us in all the secrets of high life, have given us recently to understand that, for some time back, Her Majesty has been hard at work on the Emperor's soul. Every thoughtful woman likes to be at work on her husband's soul. Young ladies enjoy the prospect before they are married, and no novel is so thoroughly popular among them as one in which beauty is the instrument in the hands of Providence for the conversion of unbelief. And it is

partly because the Empress Eugénie is discharging this high missionary duty, that she is an object of particular admiration just at this moment. When Englishwomen hear that she is very active in favor of the Pope, and couple this news with the fact that the Emperor's soul is uneasy, they sniff—if we may be forgiven the expression—the battle from afar. Their education in respect of theology and religious opinion is very different from that of men.

They have been brought up to believe strongly and heartily what they have been told, and they do not understand the half-sceptical way of regarding such things which is the result of larger views and more liberal education. It appears to them a terrible thing that the men they care for should be hesitating and doubtful about subjects where they themselves have been trained only to believe one view possible. And they set to work in the true temper of missionaries, with profound [181] eagerness and energy, and narrowness of grasp. Many genuine prayers and tears are worthily spent in the effort to tether some truant husband or a son to a family theological peg, and to prevent him from roving. And, up to a certain point, men continually give in. They find it easier and more comfortable to lower their arms, and not always to be maintaining a barren controversy. They have not the slightest wish to convince their affectionate feminine disputant, to take from her the sincere and positive dogmas on which her happiness is built, and to substitute for these a phase of doubt and difficulty for which her past intellectual life has not fitted her. Accordingly, they indulge in a thousand little hypocrisies of a more or less harmless kind.

So long as women's education continues to differ from that of men as widely as it does in England, this flexibility on the part of the latter under the influence of the former is not always amiss. It is better that the husband should be yielding than that he should hold aloof from all that interests and moves the wife, as is the case in countries where the one sex may be seen professing to believe in nothing, while the other as implicitly believes in everything. It is, however, easy to conceive of cases in which this feminine influence that seems so innocent, is in reality injurious. It may perhaps be the business of the husband to take a public part in the affairs of his time. Conscience tells him that he should be sincere, uncompromising, logical, even to the point of disputing conclusions which good and pious people consider essential and important. Or [182] he may be a religious preacher, or a religious reformer of his day, bound, in virtue of character, to maintain truth at the risk of being unpopular; or, it may be, to prosecute inquiries and reforms at the risk of shocking weaker brethren.

There are many who could tell us from their experience how terribly at such a time they have been perplexed and hampered in their duty by the affectionate ignorance, the tears, and the piety of women. Protestant clergymen in particular are sometimes taunted with their conservative tendencies, their indifference to the new lights of science, or of history, and their disinclination to embark on perilous voyages in quest of truth. Part of their conservatism arises from the fact that their practical business is generally to teach what they do know, rather than to inquire into what they do not know. Part of it comes, as we suspect, from the fact that they are married. A wife is a sort of theological drag. It serves no doubt to keep some of us from rolling too rapidly down hill. It impedes equally the progress of others over ordinarily level ground.

The importance of a social position to women is a thing which affects their influence upon men no less materially than does their religious sensibility. As a rule, they have no other means of measuring the consideration in which they are held by the world, or the success in life of those to whose fortunes they are linked, than by using a trivial and worthless social standard. Men, whose training is wider, estimate both their male and their female friends pretty fairly according to their [183] merits. But the majority of women, from their youth up, seldom think of anybody without contrasting his or her social status with their own. Success signifies to them introduction to this or that feminine circle, admission to friendships from which they have been as yet excluded, and visiting cards of a more distinguished appearance than those which at present lie upon their table. They are unable to enjoy even the ordinary intercourse of society without an *arrière pensée* as to their chance of landing themselves a step higher on the social ladder. From such absurdities the best and most refined women of course are free, but the mass of Englishwomen seldom meet without wondering who on earth each of the others is, and to which county family she belongs.

Humorous as is the spectacle of a crowd of English ladies, each of whom is employed in eyeing the lady next her and asking who she is, and comical as the point of view appears to any one who reflects on the shortness of human life and the littleness of human character, the effect of these feminine weaknesses is one which no one can be sure of escaping. We are afraid that half of the Englishmen who are snobs are made so by Englishwomen. It is impossible for the female portion of any domestic circle to be perpetually dwelling on their own social aspirations without communicating the infection to, or even forcing it upon the male. Wives and daughters become dissatisfied with their husbands' or their fathers' friends. They want to meet and to associate with people whom it is a social credit to know, and who in turn may help them to know somebody [184] beyond. Every fresh acquaintance of distinction, or of fashion, is a sort of milestone, showing the ground that has been travelled over by the family in the direction of their hopes. This sort of fever is very catching. But though men often catch it, they generally catch it from the other sex. And even when they are not impregnated with it themselves, the effect of feminine influence upon them is that they accept their lot with placidity, and acquiesce in the social struggle through which they are dragged.

No man in his senses can wish or hope to order the social life of his belongings according to his own sober judgment. He is compelled to allow them a free rein in the matter, and to abstain from even expressing the astonishment he inwardly feels. Perhaps the world of women is a new world to him, and he feels incapable of regulating any of its movements; or perhaps, if he is wise, he is

content with the reflection that little foibles do not altogether spoil real nobility of nature, and takes the bad side of a woman's education with the good. But there are innumerable matters in respect of which he cannot withdraw himself from the feminine influence about him. By degrees he comes to sympathize with the little social disappointments of his family group, and to take pleasure in their little social triumphs, which appear to be so productive of satisfaction and enjoyment to those to whom they fall. But the effect on his character is not usually wholesome. His eye is no longer single. Feminine influence has engrafted on his nature the defects of [185] feminine character, without engrafting on it also its many virtues.

Women usually fail in communicating to men their self-devotion, their gentleness, their piety; all that they manage to communicate amounts to little more than a respect for the observances of religion, and a nervous sensibility to social distinctions.

While the mental development of women continues to be so little studied, it is not surprising that the intellectual influence of the sex should be almost *nil*, or that such a modicum of it as they possess should be exerted within a very narrow sphere. It is the fault, no doubt, of our systems of female education that the mental power of the cleverest women really comes in England to very little. In its highest form it amounts to a capacity for conversation on indifferent matters, a genius for music or some other fine art, a turn for talking about the poets of the day, and perhaps for imitating their style with ease, coupled, in exceptional cases, with a talent for guessing double acrostics. To be able to do all this, and to be charming and religious too, is the whole duty of young women.

It would be difficult possibly to fit out an English young lady with the various practical accomplishments that are of use in matrimony, and to make her at the same time an intellectual equal of the other sex. But it would surely be possible to train her to understand more of the general current of the world's ideas, even if she could not devote herself to studying them in detail. What woman has now any notion of the broad outline of history of human thought? All [186] philosophy is a sealed book to her. It is the same with theology and politics. She has not the wildest conception, as a rule, of the grounds on which people think who think differently from herself; and all through life she is content to play the part of a partisan or a devotee with perfect equanimity.

While, however, feminine influence in intellectual subjects is, as it deserves to be, infinitesimal, in practice and in action women are proud of being recognized as useful and sound advisers. As outsiders and spectators they see a good deal of the game, have leisure to watch narrowly all that is going on about them, and a subtle instinct teaches them to tread delicately over all dangerous ground. It is curious how many enemies women make amongst themselves, and yet how many enemies they prevent men from making. They seem to have less of self-control or prudence as far as their own strong feelings and fortunes are concerned, than they have of tact and temper in managing the fortunes and enterprises of others.

There can, for example, be no doubt whatever that the parson who aims at being a bishop before he dies ought to marry early. The great strokes of policy which bring him preferment or popularity are pretty sure to have been devised in moments of happy inspiration, or perhaps during the watches of the night, by a feminine brain. Good mothers make saints and heroes, says the proverb, and beyond a doubt wise wives make bishops. Their influence is not the less real [187] because, unlike that of Mrs. Proudie, it is exerted chiefly behind the scenes. It is possibly because the influence possessed by women is so intangible, depending as it does less on the reason than on the sentiment, affection, and convenience of the other sex, that women are so jealous to assert and to protect it.

PIGEONS. [188]

Every now and then, as the fashionable season comes round, in some corner of its space the daily press records a wholesale slaughter of the pigeon species. The world is informed of a series of sweepstakes, in which guardsmen and peers and foreigners of distinction take part. So many birds are shot at, so many are killed, so many get away. The quality of the birds and the skill of the shooters is specified. As the minutest details of the sport are interesting, we are even told who supplies the birds, and whether the day of their massacre was bright or cloudy. This is quite as it should be. The British public can never hear too much of the doings of its gilded youth. Sweet to it is sporting news, but "aristocratic sporting news" is sweeter still.

And apart from this twofold source of interest, an element of deeper satisfaction mingles in the complacency with which it gloats over these pigeon holocausts. It is something to know that, in the last resort, we have these high-born and fashionable marksmen to protect our hearths and homes from the French invader and the irrepressible Beales. The nervous householder sleeps in his bed with a greater sense of security after reading of the awful havoc which Captain A. and the [189] Earl of B. are making of the feathery tribe. In the accuracy of their aim he sees a guarantee of order, and of the maintenance of his glorious Constitution. Foreign menace and internal discord lose something of their terrors for him as often as his eyes light upon the significant little paragraph to which we have referred. Here is an item of intelligence for the haughty Prussian and the dashing Zouave to ponder. Here is something for the mole-like Fenian and the blatant Leaguesman to put in their pipes and smoke.

The fate of the pigeons awaits all who would violate our shores, or light up the flame of sedition in the land. If, as some philosophers aver, the pigeon does not all die, but in some tranquil limbo flutters on in an eternity of innocent cooing, it must console the poor bird to reflect that, however cheap he may be held, he has not perished altogether in vain. To serve a useful purpose is the great economy of things, to point a warning, at the cost of one's heart's blood, to England's foes and traitors—to the plotter in Munster as well as the safer conspirator of the Parks—might content even a greater ambition than that which animates the gentle bosom of a fantail.

But suppose some vindictive pouter to survive his less lucky comrades, and, escaping among the birds who are duly chronicled as "getting away," to perch, full of resentment at the probable extinction of his species, in the fashionable quarter of London. He would there witness a grand act of retaliation. He would learn how Belgravia avenges Hornsey and Shepherd's Bush. He [190] would see the very men from whom his relatives had received their quietus flying to their clubs for shelter, and calling on their goddesses of the *demi-monde* to cover them. He would perceive, by an unerring instinct, that a contest was afoot in which the conditions of that suburban sweepstakes at which he had involuntarily assisted were exactly reversed. He would see those self-same sportsmen converted into the target, the flutterers of the dovecot themselves in a flutter. And he would be more than pigeon if he could repress a thrill of savage glee at the spectacle of the enemies of his race realizing by experience all the difference between shooting and being shot at.

Suppose, further, that curious to watch the operations of "aristocratic sport," the intelligent bird, following the precedent of Edgar Poe's Raven, should alight, unseen and uninvited, on some object of art in a fashionable ballroom. Here he would find himself at once in the thick of the brilliant competition. He would see a row of lovely archers, backed by a second row of older and more experienced markswomen. And in the human pigeons now cowering before their combined artillery he would recognise the heroes so lately engaged in dispatching thousands of the feathered branch of the family to oblivion. At first sight it might strike an animal of his well-known gallantry that there was nothing so very terrible in their impending fate. To fall slain by bright eyes, and with the strains of Coote and Tinney lingering on the ear, to sigh out one's soul over a draught of seltzer and champagne or the sweet poison of a strawberry ice, might seem to [191] the winged spectator a blissful ending.

The doorway of the perfumed saloon might seem but the portal of a Mahomedan paradise, in which young and beautiful houris are deporting themselves under the guardian eye of the older and less beautiful houris. To the denizen of the air all, save the want of oxygen, might appear divine. But when he surveyed more closely that sexual row of sportswomen, he would know at once that he beheld the true avengers of his race. In their stony glare, in the cold glitter of their diamonds, in the ample proportions of their well-developed shoulders, in their sliding scale of manners, now adjusted to a sugary smile and now to a stare of annihilation, he would read a deadly purpose. Nor would the diversities of skill which this fringe of amazons exhibited in the use of their weapons escape his notice. He would see some whom success had made affable, and others whom failure had made desperate; some who covered their victim with an aim of pitiless precision, and others who spoilt their chances by bungling audacity. Conspicuous among them he would observe a giddy sexagenarian, whose random attempts to share in the sport made her the laughing-stock of the circle.

And as he surveyed the *battue* he would gradually discern its tactics. The beautiful beings in tulle he would feel, by instinct, were a lure and a decoy. Once within reach of their victims, these lovely skirmishers would be seen to inflict on them a sudden wound, leaving them to be [192] despatched by the heavy reserve in *moire* and lace. As he watched the terror which these formidable beings inspired, and the business-like manner in which they addressed themselves to their task, as he noticed the jaunty destroyers of his race succumbing one by one to fate, or ignominiously attempting to "get away," he would feel that the "irony of the situation" was complete. In a vague way he would grasp the fact—hitherto undreamt of in his dove's philosophy—that, if the pigeon is preyed upon by man, man in his turn is preyed upon by the dowager.

There is, however, this difference between the fate of the pigeon and his human analogue, that, whereas the former is slain outright, the latter is often subjected to the prolonged agony of being plucked feather by feather. Not that he thinks it agony; on the contrary, he decidedly likes it, which is a wonderful proof of his simplicity, and the difference in people's tastes. But in order to pluck a human pigeon at leisure, you must first catch him. May is a good month for this operation. About now he begins to resort to the Opera and the park, and in the purlieus of either a fine specimen may be flashed. A clever sportswoman will get the earliest possible information about his movements. Much depends on forestalling her competitors.

A youthful pigeon, just emerging from his minority, or freshly alighted from the grand tour, is easily captured. There are two principal contrivances for catching human pigeons. The first is the matrimonial snare. This is worked by the dowager, in concert with her daughter, somewhat on [193] the following plan. The daughter throws herself, as if by chance, in the pigeon's way. The brilliancy of her charms naturally attracts him. Small-talk ensues, in which an extraordinary similarity between her tastes and his is casually revealed. The simple pigeon, suspecting nothing, is delighted to find so congenial a soul. Is he musical? she adores the divine art. A gourmand? she owns to the possession of a cookery-book. Ritualistic? it was but the other day that she was at St. Alban's. Turfy? He must throw his eyes over her book for the Derby. Even if his pet pastime, like the Emperor Domitian's, were killing flies, she would profess her readiness to join him in it. Or she tries another dodge, and, putting on the airs of a pretty monitress, asks him with tender

interest to confide in her.

The great point is never to lose sight of him; to follow him to balls, concerts, or races, to cleave to him like his shadow. Then, when he is fairly caught in the toils of her encircling sympathy, the elder and more experienced ally appears on the scene. Her task is to cut off his retreat. Upon her firmness and accuracy in calculating the resisting power of her pigeon, success depends. Seizing an opportunity when he is least prepared, she sternly informs him that the time for dalliance is over, that he has said and done things of a very marked kind, and that there is only one course open to him as a pigeon of honor. And under this sort of compulsion the simple creature, with his [194] rent-roll, Consols, family diamonds, and all, hops with a fairly good grace into the matrimonial toils.

The second contrivance to which he is apt to fall a victim is the infatuation trap. This is a much more elaborate machine, and is worked by one of those semi-attached couples who might sit to a new Hogarth for a new edition of *Marriage á la Mode*. The husband's part is very simple. It is to be as little in the way as possible, and to afford his sprightlier half every facility for pursuing her little game. The chief business devolves on the lady. It is her task to make the pigeon fall madly in love with her, and to keep him so, without overstepping the bounds of conventional propriety. Happily this can be managed nowadays without either elopement or scandal. Among the improvements of this mechanical age, it has been found possible to enlarge the limits of wedlock so as to include a third person.

A life-long *tête-á-tête*, which was the old conception of marriage, is quite obsolete. It has given way to the triangular theory, by which a new element, in the shape of a parasitical adorer, has been introduced into the holy state. Matrimony, as reconstituted by fashionable scholiasts, comprises husband, wife, and, to relieve the tedium of the situation, a good-looking appendage of the male sex, who is an agreeable companion of the one and the devoted slave of the other. Each contributes to the harmony of the arrangement—the husband, a background; the wife, the charms of her presence; the adorer, cash. Whatever other experience it brings, marriage [195] generally sharpens the appreciation of the value of money; sentiment is sweet, but it is an article of confectionery, for which its fair dispensers in the married ranks exact an equivalent.

In trapping her victim, therefore, a sharp young matron is careful to let her choice fall on a plump specimen of the pigeon species—a pigeon with a long purse and little brains. Once reduced to a state of infatuation, almost anything may be done with him. The luxury of plucking him will employ her delicate fingers for a long time to come. He may be sponged upon to any extent. The one thing he can do really well is to pay. His yacht, his drag, his brougham, his riding-horses, his shooting-box, all are at her disposal. At his expense she dines at Greenwich; at his expense she views the Derby; at his expense she enjoys an opera-box. And in return for all this she has only to smile and murmur "*so* nice," for the soft simpleton to fancy himself amply repaid. Then she exacts a great many costly presents, to say nothing of gloves, trinkets, and *bouquets*. It is curious to note how the code of propriety has altered in this particular.

In old-fashioned novels the stereotyped dodge for compromising a lady's reputation is to force a present or a loan of money on her. Nowadays Lovelace's anxiety is just the other way—to keep the acquisitive propensity of his liege lady within tolerable bounds. It would be a great mistake to suppose that a woman can play this game without special gifts and aptitudes for it. It requires [196] peculiar talents, and peculiar antecedents. First and foremost, she must have married a man whom she both dislikes and despises. And, further, she must be proof against the weakness which some of her sex exhibit, of growing fond of husbands who, without being Admirable Crichtons, treat them kindly and with forbearance. Next, she must have thrown overboard all the twaddle about domestic duties and responsibilities. If her child sickens of the measles just as she is starting for her bivouac in Norway, or a course of dinners in the Palais Royal, her duty is to call in the doctor and go. Weeks afterwards you will find the little darling picking up flesh, in mamma's absence, at some obscure watering-place. Then her temperament must be cool, calculating, and passionless in no ordinary degree, and this character is written in the hard lines of her mouth and the cold light of her fine eyes.

Lastly, she must have, not a superstitious, but an intelligent regard for the world's opinion, or rather for the opinion of the influential part of it. No one has a nicer perception of the difference in the relative importance of stupid country gossip and ostracism from certain great houses in London. No one takes more pains to study appearances so long as they don't clash with her amusements. Indeed, you will generally find that her dear friend is a young lady of great simplicity and irreproachable principles, whom she admits just enough, but not too far, into her confidence, and who finds it worth while to enact the part, now of a blind, and now of a foil.

If any one asserts that this treatment of the human pigeon is cruel, we can only reply, with a [197] correspondent of the *Times* who writes to rebuke the humanitarians who would rob a poor boa of his squealing rabbit—away with such cant! Is a married woman to be stinted of her "small pleasures" because prudes affect to think the means by which they are obtained unfeminine? As well might they think it unfeline in pussy to play with her mouse.

The walking pigeon is as much intended for the prey of a stronger species as the pigeon that flies. The plucking which he receives at the hands of his fair manipulator is nothing to what he would get at the hands of his own sex, in the army, on the turf, or in the city. If the pigeon has reason to think himself lucky in faring no worse, the non-pigeon section of society has no less reason to be grateful for a new illustration of female character. Not that the mercenary development in some of our young matrons is altogether new. It is only an old domestic virtue,

carried to an extreme—thrift, running into an engaging rapacity.

AMBITIOUS WIVES.

[198]

The recent death of Mrs. Proudie, who was so well known and so little loved by the readers of Mr. Trollope's novels, is one of those occasions which ought not to be allowed to pass away without being improved. To many men it will suggest many things. She was a type. As a type ought to be, she was perfect and full-blown. But her characteristics enter into other women in varying degrees, and with all sorts of minor colors. The Proudie element in wives and women is one of those unrecognised yet potent conditions of life which master us all, and yet are admitted and taken into calculation and account by none. It is in the nature of things that such an element should exist, and should be powerful in this peculiar and oblique way. We deny women the direct exercise of their capacities, and the immediate gratification of an overt ambition. The natural result is that they run to artifice, and that a good-natured husband is made the conductor between an ambitious wife and the outer world where the prizes of ambition are scrambled for. He is the wretched buffer through which the impetuous forces of his wife impinge upon his neighbors. That is to say, he leads an uneasy life between two ever colliding bodies, being equally misunderstood and equally reviled by either.

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This is the evil result of a state of things in which natural distinctions and conventional distinctions are a very long way from coinciding. The theory is that women are peaceful domestic beings, with no object beyond household cares, no wish nor will outside the objects of the man and his children, no active opinion or concern in the larger affairs of the State. Every man, on the other hand, is supposed to have views and principles about public topics, and to be anxious to make more or less of a figure in the enforcement of his views, to exercise in some shape an influence among his fellows, and to win renown of one sort or another. Of course if this division of the male and female natures covered the whole ground, society would be in a very well-balanced state, and things would go on very smoothly in consequence of the perfect equilibrium established by the exceeding contentedness of women and the constant activity and ambition of men.

But a very small observation of life is quite enough to disclose how ill the facts correspond with the accepted hypothesis about them. We are constantly being told of some aspiring man that he is, in truth, no more than the representative of an aspiring wife. He would fain live his life in dignified or undignified serenity, and cares not a jot for a seat in the House of Commons, or for being made a bishop, or for any of those other objects which allure men out of a tranquil and independent existence. But he has a wife who does care for these things. She cannot be a member of Parliament or a bishop in her own person, but it is something to be the wife of somebody who can be these things.

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A part of the glory of the man is reflected upon the head of the woman. She receives her reward in a second-hand way, but still it is glory of its own sort. She becomes a leading lady in a provincial town, and during the season in town she is asked out to houses which she is very eager to get into, and of which she can talk with easily assumed familiarity when she returns to the provinces again. She is presented at Court too, and this makes her descend to the provincial plain with an aroma of Celestial dignity like that of Venus when she descended from Olympus. A bishop's wife is still more amply rewarded. Without being so imperious as the late Mrs. Proudie was, she has still a thousand of those opportunities for displaying power which are so dear to people who are fictitiously supposed to be too weak to care for power. Minor canons, incumbents, curates, and all their wives, pay her profound deference; or, if they do not, she can "put the screw on" in a gushing manner which is exceedingly effective.

There are women, it is true, with souls above these light social matters. They do not particularly value the privilege of figuring as lady-patroness of a ball or bazaar, or the delights of trampling on a curate, or of being distantly adored by the wife of a minor canon. But they really have an interest in politics, or in some one or two special departments of that comprehensive subject. They would like to pass an Act of Parliament making it a capital offence for any guardian of the poor or relieving-officer to refuse to give the paupers as much as they should choose to ask for. Drainage is the strong point of some women. Sewage with them is the key to civilization.

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Perhaps most political women are actively interested in public affairs simply because they perceive that this is the most openly recognised sphere of influence and power; and what they yearn after is to be influential, and to stand on something higher than the ordinary level in the world, for no other reason than that it is higher than the ordinary level. Nobody has any right to find fault with this temper, provided the ladies who are possessed by it do not mistake mere domineering for the extraordinary elevation after which they aspire. It is through this temper, whether in one sex or the other, that the world is made better. If a certain number of men and women were not ambitious, what would become of the rest of us who possess our souls in patience and moderation?

The only question is whether what we may call vicarious ambition, or aspirations by proxy, are particularly desirable forms of a confessedly useful and desirable sentiment. For the peace of mind of the man who is not ambitious, but is only pretending to be so, we may be pretty sure that the domestic stimulus has some drawbacks. We do not mean drawbacks after the manner of Mrs.

Caudle. These show a coarse and vulgar conception of the goads which a man may have applied to him in his inner circle. There are moral and unheard reproofs. There is a consciousness in the [202] mind of a man that his wife thinks him (with all possible affection and tenderness) rather a poor creature for not taking his position in the world. And if he happens to be a man of anything like fine sensibility, this will make him exceedingly uneasy.

The uneasiness may then become sufficiently decided to make him willing to undergo any amount of labor and outlay, rather than endure the presence of this æthereal skeleton in the family closet. He is quite right. He could barely preserve his self-respect otherwise. But he is mistaken if he fancies that a single step or a single series of steps will demolish the skeleton entirely. One compliance with the ambition of his wife will speedily beget the necessity for another. It is notorious that a thoroughly aspiring man is never content without the prospect of scaling new heights. No more is an aspiring woman. Whether you are directly ambitious, as a man is, and for yourself, or indirectly and for somebody else, as a woman is, in either case the law is the same. New summits ever glitter in the distance. You have got your husband into the House of Commons. That glory suffices for a month.

At the end of two months it seems a very dim glory indeed, and having long been at an end, it by this time sinks into the second place of a means. The sacrificial calf must next be made to speak. He must acquire a reputation. Here in a good many cases, we suspect, the process finally stops. A man may be got into the House, but the coveted exaltation of that atmosphere does not convert a quiet, peaceable, dull man into an orator. It does not give him ideas and the faculty of articulate [203] speech. At this point, if he be wise, he draws the line. He endures the skeleton as best he may, or else his wife, quenching her ambition, resigns herself to incurable destiny, and learns to be content with the limits set by the fates to her lord's capacities. There are still certain fields open to her own powers, irrespective of what he is able to do.

For example, she may open a *salon*, and there may exert unspeakable influence over all kinds of important people. This is not at present particularly congenial to English ground. As yet, the most vigorous intellectual people seem to have felt an active social life as something beneath them, and the highly social people have not been conspicuous for the activity of their intellectual life. The people who go so greatly to parties do not care for what they sum up, with an admirably comprehensive vagueness, as "intellect;" while, on the other hand, scholars and thinkers are wont to look on time given to society as something very like time absolutely wasted. In such a state of feeling, it is difficult for a clever woman to exercise much power.

But, as other things improve, this unsocial feeling will dissolve. Clever men will see that a couple of hours spent with other clever men are not wasted just because a lady is of the party. Nobody would seriously maintain that this is so even now, but people are very often strongly under the influence of vague notions which they would never dream of seriously maintaining. When women [204] get their rights, the *salon* will become an institution. It will create a very fine field for the cultivation of their talents. And in proportion as it allows a woman to make a career for herself, it will bring relief to many excellent husbands who will then no longer have to make careers for them at the expense of overstraining their own too slender powers.

It is possible, however, that even then the husband of an ambitious wife may not be fully contented. For people with any degree of weakness or incapacity in them are always more prone than their neighbors to littlenesses and meannesses, and a man who is not able to win much renown on his own account may possibly not be too well pleased to see his Wife surrounded by his intellectual betters. Indeed, he may even, if he is of a very mean nature indeed, resent the spectacle of her own predominance. It is some comfort to think that in such case the man's own temper will be his severest punishment.

As a rule, however, it is pleasant to think that with ambition in women, which is not their peculiarity, is yoked tact, which is their peculiarity emphatically. Hence, therefore, wives who are ambitious for their lords have often the discretion to conceal their mood. They may rule with a hand of iron, but the hand is sagely concealed in a glove of velvet. A man may be the creature of his wife's lofty projects, and yet dream all the time that he is altogether chalking out his own course.

George II. used to be humored in this way by Queen Caroline. Bishop Proudie, on the other hand, [205] was ruled by his wife, and knew that he was a mere weapon in her hands; and, what was even worse than all, knew that the rest of mankind knew this. This must be uncommonly unpleasant, we should suppose. The middle position of the husband who only now and then suspects in a dreamy way that he is being prompted and urged on and directed by an ambitious wife, and has sense enough not to inflame himself with chimerical notions about the superiority and grandeur of the male sex—this perhaps is not so bad. If the tide of ambition runs rather sluggish in yourself, it is a plain advantage to have somebody at your side with enthusiasm enough to atone for the deficiency.

It is impossible to tell how much good the world gets, which otherwise it would miss, simply out of the fact that women are discontented with their position. Now and then, it is understood, the husband who is thus made a mere conductor for the mental electricity of a wife who is too clever for him may feel a little bored, and almost wish that he had married a girl instead. But enthusiasm spreads, and in a general way the fervor of the wife who aspires to distinction proves catching to the husband. Some ladies are found to prefer this position to any other. They are full of power, and have abundance of room for energy, and yet they have no responsibility. They get their ample share of the spoil, and yet they do not bear the public heat and burden of the day. It

is only the more martial souls among them for whom this is not enough.

PLATONIC WOMAN.

[206]

In the wearier hours of life, when the season is over, and the boredom of country visits is beginning to tell on the hardy constitutions that have weathered out crush and ball-room, there is usually a moment when the heroine of twenty summers bemoans the hardships of her lot. Her brother snuffed her out yesterday when she tried politics, and the clerical uncle who comes in with the vacation extinguished a well-meant attempt at theology by a vague but severe reference to the Fathers. If the afternoon is particularly rainy, and Mudie's box is exhausted, the sufferer possibly goes further, and rises into eloquent revolt against the decorums of life.

There is indeed one career left to woman, but a general looseness of grammar, and a conscious insecurity in the matter of spelling, stand in the way of literary expression of the burning thoughts within her. All she can do is to moan over her lot and to take refuge in the works of Miss Hominy. There she learns the great theory of the equality of the sexes, the advancement of woman and the tyranny of man. If her head doesn't ache, and holds out for a few pages more, she is comforted to find that her aspirations have a philosophic character. She is able to tell the [207] heavy Guardsman who takes her down to dinner and parries her observations with a joke that they have the sanction of the deepest of Athenian thinkers.

It is, we suppose, necessary that woman should have her philosopher, but it must be owned that she has made an odd choice in Plato. No one would be more astonished than the severe dialectician of the Academy at the feminine conception of a sage of dreamy and poetic temperament, who spends half his time in asserting woman's rights, and half in inventing a peculiar species of flirtation. Platonic attachments, whatever their real origin may be, will scarcely be traced in the pages of Plato; and the rights of woman, as they are advocated in the Republic, are sadly deficient in the essential points of free love and elective affinity.

The appearance of a real Platonic woman in the midst of a caucus of such female agitators as those who were lately engaged in stumping with singular ill success the American States of the West would, we imagine, give a somewhat novel turn to the discussion, and strip of a good deal of adoring admiration the philosopher in whom strong-minded woman has of late found a patron and friend. Plato is a little too logical and too fond of stating plain facts in plain words to suit the Miss Hominys who would put the legs of every pianoforte in petticoats, and if the Platonic woman were to prove as outspoken as her inventor, the conference would, we fear, come abruptly to an end. But if once the difficulty of decorum could be got over, some instruction and no little [208] amusement might be derived from the inquiry which the discussion would open, as to how far the modern attitude of woman fulfils the dreams of her favorite philosopher.

The institution of Ladies' Colleges is a sufficient proof that woman has arrived at Plato's conception of an identity of education for the two sexes. Professors, lecturers, class-rooms, note-books, the whole machinery of University teaching, is at her disposal. Logic and the long-envied classics are in the curriculum. Governesses are abolished, and the fair girl-graduates may listen to the sterner teachings of academical tutors. It is amusing to see how utterly discomfited the new Professor generally is when he comes in sight of his class. He feels that he must be interesting, but he is haunted above all with the sense that he must be proper. He remembers that when, in reply to the lady-principal's inquiry how he liked his class, he answered, with the strictest intellectual reference, that they were "charming," the stern matron suggested that another adjective would perhaps be more appropriate. He felt his whole moral sense as a teacher ebbing away.

In the case of men he would insist on a thorough treatment of his subject, and would avoid sentiment and personal details as insults to their intelligence; but what is he to do with rows of pretty faces that grow black as he touches upon the dialect of Socrates, but kindle into life and animation when he depicts the sage's snub nose? Anecdotes, pretty stories, snatches of poetical [209] quotation, slip in more and more as the students perceive and exercise their power. Men, too, are either intelligent or unintelligent, but the unhappy Professor at a Ladies' College soon perceives that he has to deal with a class of minds which are both at once. A luckless gentleman, after lecturing for forty minutes, found that the lecture had been most carefully listened to and reproduced in the note-books, but with the trifling substitution in every instance of the word "Phœnician" for "Venetian." Above all, he is puzzled with the profuse employment of these note-books.

To the Platonic girl her note-book takes the place of the old-fashioned diary. It is scribbled down roughly at the lecture and copied out fairly at night. It used to be a frightful thought that every evening, before retiring to rest, the girl with whom one had been chatting intended seriously to probe the state of her heart and set down her affections in black and white; but it is hardly less formidable to imagine her refusing to lay her head on her pillow before she has finished her fair copy of the battle of Salamis. The universality of female studies, too, astounds the teacher who is fresh from the world of man; he stands aghast before a girl who is learning four languages at once, besides attending courses on logic, music, and the use of the globes. This omnivorous appetite for knowledge he finds to co-exist with a great weakness in the minor matters of spelling, and a profound indifference to the simplest rules of grammar. We do not wonder then at

Professors being a little shy of Ladies' Colleges; nor is it less easy to see why the Platonic theory of education has taken so little with the girls themselves. After all, the grievance of which they complain has its advantages. [210]

The worst of bores is restrained by courtesy from boring you if you give him no cue for further conversation, and the plea of utter ignorance which an English girl can commonly advance on any subject is at any rate a defence against the worst pests of society. On the other hand, the ingenuous confession that she really knows nothing about it can be turned by a smile into a prelude to the most engaging conversation, and into an implied flattery of the neatest kind to the favored being whose superiority is acknowledged. Ignorance, in fact, of this winsome order is one of the stock weapons of the feminine armory.

The man who looks philosophically back after marriage to discover why on earth he is married at all will generally find that the mischief began in the *naïve* confession on the part of his future wife of a total ignorance which asked humbly for enlightenment. One of the grandest *coups* we ever knew made in this way was effected by a desire on the part of a faded beauty to know the pedigree of a horse. The pride of her next neighbor at finding himself the possessor of knowledge on any subject on earth took the form of the most practical gratitude a man can show. But it is not before marriage only that woman finds her ignorance act as a charm. Husbands find pleasure in talking politics to their wives simply because, as they stand on the hearthrug, they are displaying their own mental superiority. An Englishman likes to be master of his own house, but [211] he dearly loves to be schoolmaster.

A Platonic woman as well-informed as her husband would deprive him of this daily source of domestic enjoyment; his lecture would be reduced to discussion, and to discussion in which he might be defeated. To rob him of his oracular infallibility might greatly improve the husband, but it would revolutionize the character of the home.

It is difficult to see at first sight any analogy between the Puritanical form of flirtation which calls itself a Platonic attachment, and the provisions by which Plato excluded all peculiar love or matrimonial choice from his commonwealth. The likeness is really to be found in the resolve on which both are based to obtain all the advantages of social intercourse between the sexes without the interference of passion. In a well-regulated State, no doubt, passion is a bore, and this is just the aspect which it takes to a highly regulated woman. An outburst of affection on the part of her numerous admirers would break up a very pleasant circle, and put an end to some charming conversations. On the other hand, the quiet sense of some special relationship, the faint odor of a passion carefully sealed up, gives a piquancy and flavor to social friendship which mere association wants. Very frequently such a relation forms an admirable retreat from stormier experiences in the past, and the tender grace of a day that is dead hangs pleasantly enough over the days that remain.

But the Platonic woman proper, in this sense, is the spinster of five-and-thirty. She is clever [212] enough to know that the day for inspiring grand passions is gone by, but that there is still nothing ridiculous in mingling a little sentiment with her friendly relations. She moves in maiden meditation fancy free, but the vestal flame of her life is none the more sullied for a slight tinge of earthly color. It is a connection that is at once interesting, undefined, and perfectly safe. It throws a little poetry over life to know that one being is cherishing a perfectly moral and carefully toned-down attachment for another, which will last for years, but never exceed the bounds of a smile and a squeeze of the hand.

Animals in the lowest scale of life are notoriously the hardest to kill, and it is just this low vitality, as it were, of Platonic attachment that makes it so perfectly indestructible. Its real use is in keeping up a sort of minute irrigation of a good deal of human ground which would be barren without it. These little tricklings of affection, so small as not to disturb one's sleep or to drive one to compose a single sonnet, keep up a certain consciousness of attraction, and beget a corresponding return of kindliness and good temper towards the world around. A woman who has once given up the hope of being loved is a nuisance to everybody. But the Platonic woman need never give up her hope of being loved; she has reduced affection to a minimum, but from its very minuteness there is little or no motive to snap the bond, and with time habit makes it indestructible.

One Christian body, we believe—the Moravians—still carries out the principle of Plato's ideal [213] state in giving woman no choice in the selection of a spouse. The elders arrange their matches as the wise men of the Republic were wont to do. A friend of ours once met six young women going out to some Northern settlement of the Moravians with a view to marriage. "What is your husband's name?" he asked one. "I don't know; I shall find out when I see him," she answered. But we have heard of only one State which realizes Plato's theory as to the equal participation of woman in man's responsibilities as well as in his privileges, and that is the kingdom of Dahomey. If women were to learn and govern like men, Plato argued, women must fight like men, and the Amazons of Dahomey fight like very terrible men indeed.

But we have as yet heard of no military grievance on the part of injured woman. She has not yet discovered the hardship of being deprived of a commission, or denied the Victoria Cross. No Miss Faithful has challenged woman's right to glory by the creation of a corps of riflewomen. Even Dr. Mary Walker, though she could boast of having gone through the American war, went through it with a scalpel, and not with a sword. We are far from attributing this peaceful attitude of modern woman, inferior though it be to the Platonic ideal, to any undue physical sensitiveness to danger, or to inability for deeds of daring; we attribute it simply to a sense that there is a warfare which

she is discharging already, and with the carrying on of which any more public exertions would interfere. [214]

Woman alone keeps up the private family warfare which in the earlier stages of society required all the energies of man. It is a field from which man has completely retired, and which would be left wholly vacant were it not occupied by woman. The stir, the jostling, the squabbling of social life, are all her own. We owe it to her that the family existence of England does not rot in mere inaction and peace. The guerilla warfare of house with house, the fierce rivalry of social circle with social circle, the struggle for precedence, the jealousies and envyings and rancors of every day—these are things which no man will take a proper interest in, and which it is lucky that woman can undertake for him. The Platonic woman of to-day may not march to the field or storm the breach, but she is unequalled in outmanœuvring a rival, in forcing an entrance into society, in massacring an enemy's reputation, in carrying off matrimonial spoil. In war, then, as in education and the affections, modern woman has developed the spirit without copying the form of the Platonic ideal. After all superficial contrasts have been exhausted, she may still claim the patronage of the philosopher of Academe.

MAN AND HIS MASTER. [215]

There are, it must be owned, few things on earth of less interest at first sight than a girl in her teens. She is a mere bundle of pale colorless virtues, a little shy, slightly studious, passively obedient, tamely religious. Her tastes are "simple"—she has no particular preference, that is, for anything; her aims incline mildly towards a future of balls to come; her rule of life is an hourly reference to "mamma." She is without even the charm of variety; she has been hot-pressed in the most approved finishing establishments, and is turned out the exact double of her sister or her cousin or her friend, with the same stereotyped manner, the same smattering of accomplishments, the same contribution to society of her little sum of superficial information. We wonder how it is that any one can take an interest in a creature of this sort, just as we wonder how any one can take an interest in the *Court Circular*. And yet there are few sentiments more pardonable, as there are none more national, than our interest in that marvellous document.

A people which chooses to be governed by kings and queens has a right to realize the fact that kings and queens are human beings, that they shoot, drive, take the air like the subjects whom they govern. And if in some coming day we are to toss up our hats and shout ourselves hoarse for a sovereign who is still in his cradle, it is wise as well as natural that we should cultivate an interest in his babyhood, that we should hang on the vicissitudes of his teeth and his measles, that we should be curious as to the title of his spelling-book, and the exact score of his last game at cricket. [216]

It is precisely the same interest which attaches us to the loosely-tied bundle of virtues and accomplishments which we call a girl. We recognise in her our future ruler. The shy, modest creature who has no thought but a dance, and no will but mamma's, will in a few years be our master, changing our habits, moulding our tastes, bending our characters to her own. In the midst of our own drawing-room, in our pet easy-chair, we shall see that retiring figure quietly established, with downcast eyes, and hands busy with their crochet-needles, what Knox called, in days before a higher knowledge had dawned, "the Monstrous Regimen of Women."

We are far from sharing the sentiments of the Scotch Reformer, and if we attempt here to seize a few of the characteristics of the rule against which he revolted, we hope to avoid his bitterness as carefully as his prolixity. What was a new thing in his day has become old in ours, and man learns perhaps somewhat too easily to acquiesce in "established facts." It is without a dream of revolt, and simply in a philosophical spirit, that we approach the subject. Indeed, it is a feeling of admiration rather than of rebellion which seizes us when we begin to reflect on the character of woman's sway, and on the simplicity of the means by which she creates and establishes it. A little love, a little listening, a little patience, a little persistence, and the game is won. [217]

How charmingly natural and unobjectionable, for instance, is the very first move in it—what we may venture to call, since we have to create the very terminology of our subject, the Isolation of Man. When Brown meets us in the street and hopes that his approaching marriage will make no difference in our friendship, and that we shall see as much of one another as before, we know that the phrases simply mean that our intimacy is at an end. There will be no more pleasant lounges in the morning, no more strolls in the park, no more evenings at the club. Woman has succeeded in so completely establishing this cessation of former friendships as a condition of the new married life that hardly any one dreams of thinking what an enormous sacrifice it is. There are very few men, after all, who are not dependent on their little group of intimates for the general drift of their opinions, the general temper of their mind and character of their lives. Their mutual advice, support, praise or dispraise, enthusiasm, abhorrence, likings, dislikings, constitute the atmosphere in which one lives.

A good deal of real modesty lingers about an unmarried man; he feels far more confident in his own opinion if he knows it is Smith's opinion too, and his conception of life acquires all its definiteness from its being shared with half a dozen fairly reasonable fellows. It is no slight triumph that woman should not only have succeeded in enforcing the dissolution of this social tie as the first condition of married life, but that she has invested that dissolution with the air of an [218]

axiom which nobody dreams of disputing. The triumph is, as we said, won by the simplest agency —by nothing, in short, but a dexterous double appeal to human conceit. She is so weak, so frail, so helpless, so strange to this new world into which she has plunged from the realms of innocent girlhood, so utterly dependent on her husband, that a man sees at once that he has not a moment left for any one else.

There is pleasure in the thought of all that delicate weakness appealing to our strength, of that innocent ignorance looking up to us for guidance through the wilderness of the world. Of course it will soon be over, and when the dear dependent has learnt to walk alone a little we can go back to the old faces and take our segar as before. But somehow the return never comes, or, if it does come, the old faces have grown far less enchanting to us. The truth is, we have tasted the second pleasure of married life—the pleasure of being an authority. All that shy appeal to us, all that confession of ignorance, has taught us what wonderfully wise fellows we are. We are far less inclined to wait for Smith's approval, or to take our tone from the group at the club-window. It is, to say the least, far pleasanter to be an authority at home. Gradually we find ourselves becoming [219]
oracular, having opinions on every subject that a leading article can give us one upon, correcting the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the Malt-tax and censuring Lord Stanley's policy towards the King of Ashantee. Life takes a new interest when we can put it so volubly into words. At the same time we feel that the interest is hardly shared by the world.

Our old associates apparently fail to appreciate the change in us, or to listen to our disquisitions any more than they did of old; it is a comfort to feel that we have a home to retreat to, and that there is one there who will. To the subtle flattery, in short, of weakness and of ignorance, woman has now added the flattery of listening. To say little, to contribute hardly more than a cue now and then, but to be attentive, to be interested, to brighten at the proper moment, to laugh at the proper joke, to suggest the exact amount of difficulties which you require to make your oratorical triumph complete, and to join with an unreserved assent in its conclusion, that is the simple secret of the power of ninety-nine wives out of a hundred. It is a power which is far from being confined to the home. The most brilliant salons have always been created by dexterous listeners.

A pleasant house is not a house where one is especially talked to, but where one discovers that one talks more easily than elsewhere. The tact is certainly invaluable which enables a woman to know the strong points of her guests, to lead up to their subjects, to supply points for [220]
conversation, and then to leave it quietly alone. But it is only a display on the grand scale of that particular faculty of silence which wins its quiet triumphs on every hearth-rug.

The faculty, however, has other triumphs to win besides those in which it figures as a delicate administration of flattery to the vanity of men. It is the force which woman holds in reserve for the hour of revolt. For it must be owned that, pleasant as the tyranny is, men sometimes wake up to the fact that it is a tyranny, that in the most seductive way in the world they are being wheedled out of associations that are really dear to them, that their life is being cramped and confined, that their aims are being lowered. Then the newly-found eloquence exhausts itself in a declaration of revolt.

Things cannot go on in this way, life cannot be ruined for caprices. It is needless, perhaps, to repeat the rhetoric of rebellion, and all the more needless because it shares the fate of all rhetoric in producing not the slightest impression on the mind to which it is addressed. The wife simply listens as before, though the listening is now far from encouraging to eloquence. She is perfectly patient, patient in her refusal to continue an irritating discussion, patient in bearing your little spurts of vexation; she listens quietly to-day, with the air of one who is perfectly prepared to listen quietly to-morrow. But even rhetoric has its limits, and now that the cues have ceased, a husband finds it a little difficult to keep up a discussion where he has to supply both [221]
arguments and replies.

Moreover, the tact which managed in former days to place him in a highly pleasant position by the confession of weakness, now, by the very same silent avowal, places him in a decidedly unpleasant one. If a woman's air simply says at the end of it all, "I can't answer you, but I know I am right," a man has a lurking sense that his copious rhetoric has had a smack of the cowardly as well as of the tyrannical about it. And so, after a vigorous denunciation of some particular thing which his wife has done, a husband commonly finds himself no further than before; and the very instant that, from sheer weariness, he ceases, the wife usually steals out and does it again.

There is something feline about this combination of perfect patience with quiet persistence—a combination which the Jesuits on a larger scale have turned into the characteristic of their order. It is especially remarkable when it breaks the bonds of silence, and takes the form of what in vulgar language is called "nagging." No form of torture which has as yet been invented, save, perhaps, the slow dropping of water on some highly sensitive part of the frame, can afford a parallel to this ingenious application of the principle of persistence.

The absolute certainty that, when snub or scolding or refusal have died into silence, the word will be said again; the certainty that it will be said year after year, month after month, week after [222]
week; the irritation of expecting it, the irritation of hearing it, the irritation of expecting it again, tell on the firmest will in the world. In the long run the wife wins. The son goes to Harrow, though reason has proved a dozen times over that we can only afford the expense of Marlborough; the family gets its Alpine tour, though logic and unpaid bills imperatively dictate the choice of a quiet watering place. You yield, and you see that every one in the house knew that you would yield. There wasn't a servant who didn't know every turn of the domestic screw, or who took your resistance for more than the usual routine of the operation. "Time and I," said

Philip of Spain, "against any two." It is no wonder if, fighting alone for prudence and economy, one is beaten by time and one's wife.

We have no wish to dispute the enormous benefits to man of woman's supremacy, but we may fairly leave the statement of them to the numerous troup of poets who dispute with Mr. Tupper the theme of the affections. For ourselves, we may undertake, perhaps, the humbler task of pointing out very briefly some of the disadvantages which, as in all human things, counterbalance these benefits. In the first place, feminine rule is certainly not favorable to anything like largeness of mind or breadth of view. It creates, as we have seen, an excessive self-conceit and opinionativeness, and then it directs these qualities to very small ends indeed. Woman lives from her childhood in a world of petty details, of minute household and other cares, of bargains where [223] the price of every yard ends in some fraction of a penny. The habit of mind which is formed by these and similar influences becomes the spirit of the house, a spirit admirable no doubt in many ways, but excessively small.

The quarrels of a woman's life, her social warfare, her battles about precedence, her upward progress from set to set, have all the same stamp of Lilliput on them. But it is to these small details, these little pleasures and little anxieties and little disappointments and little ambitions, that a wife generally manages to bend the temper of her spouse. He gets gradually to share her indifference to large interests, to broad public questions. He imbibes little by little the most fatal of all kinds of selfishness, the selfishness of the home. It would be difficult, perhaps, to say how much of the patriotism of the Old World was owing to the inferior position of woman; but it is certain that the influence of woman tells fatally against any self-sacrificing devotion to those larger public virtues of which patriotism is one of the chief. Whether from innate narrowness of mind, or from defective training, or from the excessive development of the affections, family interests far outweigh, in the feminine estimation, any larger national or human considerations.

If ever the suffrage is given to woman, it will be necessary to punish bribery with the treadmill, for no "person" will regard it as a crime to barter away her vote for a year's schooling for Johnny or a new frock for Maud. Nothing tells more plainly the difference between the Old World and the [224] New than the constant returns home during war. We can hardly conceive Pericles or even Alcibiades applying for leave of absence on the ground of "private affairs." But then Pericles and Alcibiades had no home that they could set above the interests of the State.

Lastly, from this narrow view bounded strictly by the limits and interests of the home comes, it may be feared, a vast deal of social and political bitterness and intolerance. Her very nature, her "deductive spirit," as Mr. Buckle puts it prettily for her, makes woman essentially a dogmatist. She has none of the larger intercourse with other minds and adverse circumstances which often creates the form, if not the spirit, of tolerance in the narrowest of men. Her very excellence and faith make her exactly what they made Queen Mary—a conscientious and therefore merciless persecutor.

It is just this feminine narrowness, this feminine conscientiousness, in the clergy which unfits them for any position where justice or moderation is requisite. Justice is a quality unknown to woman, and against which she wages a fierce battle in the house and in the world. There are few husbands who have been made more just, more tolerant, more large-hearted and large-headed, by their wives; for justice lives in a drier light than that of the affections, and dry light is not a very popular mode of illumination under "the monstrous regimen of women."

THE GOOSE AND THE GANDER. [225]

Proverbs, as a rule, are believed to contain amongst them somehow or other a quantity of truth. There is scarcely one proverb which has not got another proverb that flatly contradicts it, and between the two it would be very odd if there was not a great deal of sound sense somewhere. There is, however, one of the number which, as every candid critic must allow, is based on an egregious falsehood—the proverb, namely, which affirms, against all experience, that whatever is good for the goose is good for the gander. Viewing the goose as the type of woman, and the gander as the type of man, no adage could be more preposterous or untenable. Such a maxim flies dead in the very face of society, and is calculated to introduce disturbance into the orderly sequence and subordination of the sexes. Who first invented it, it is difficult to conceive, unless it was some rustic Mrs. Poyser, full of the consciousness of domestic power, and anxious to reverse in daily life the law of priority which obtained—as she must have seen—even in her own poultry-yard.

There is one way of reading the proverb which perhaps renders it less monstrous; and if we confine ourselves to the view that "sauce" for the goose is also "sauce" for the gander, we escape from any of the philosophical difficulties in which the other version involves us. No doubt, when [226] they are dead, goose and gander are alike, even in the way they are dressed, and there is no superiority on the part of either. Death makes all genders epicene. Except for one solitary text about silence in heaven for half an hour, which some cynical commentators have explained as indicating a temporary banishment from Paradise of one of the sexes, distinctions of this sort need not be supposed to continue after the present life. If we are to take the former reading, and to test it by what we know of life, nothing can be more unfounded, or more calculated to give a wrong impression as to the facts. Were it not too late, the proverb ought to be altered; and

perhaps it is not absolutely hopeless to persuade Mr. Tupper to see to it.

"What is good for the goose is bad for the gander," or "what is bad for the goose is good for the gander;" or, perhaps, "what is a sin in the goose is only the gander's way," would read quite as well, would not be so diametrically at variance with the ordinary rules of social life, and, accordingly, would be infinitely truer and more moral. Even Mr. Mill, who is the advocate of female emancipation and female suffrage, never has gone so far as to say that all women, as well as all men, are brothers. The female suffrage, as we know, is merely a question of time. Before very long, no doubt, there will be a feminine Reform Bill, during the course of which Mr. Disraeli will explain that the feminine franchise has always been the one idea of the Conservative party, and in which the compound housekeeper will occupy as prominent a position as the compound [227] householder ever could have done. Nobody, however, has as yet absolutely asserted, we do not say the equality, for equality is an invidious term, but the indifference of the sexes. And this being so, it is strange that a proverb should be retained which is so opposed to every notion that passes current in the world.

As the legislation of the world has hitherto been uniformly in the hands of men, it is not astonishing that it has always proceeded on the assumption of the absolute dependence of the weaker upon the stronger sex. Several thousand years of intellectual and political supremacy must have altered the type imperceptibly, and made the difference between the ordinary run of men and women far more marked than nature intended it originally to be. All theology, whether Christian or pagan, has been in the habit of representing woman as designed chiefly to be a sort of ornament and appendage to man; and the allegory of the creation of Eve, though Oriental in its tone, does nevertheless correspond to a vague feeling among even civilized nations that woman's mission is to fill up a gap in man's daily life.

Nor are they merely the opinions and laws of the world which have moulded themselves on this basis. The whole imagination of the race has been fed upon the notion, until the relations between the two sexes have become the one thing on which fancy, sentiment, and hope are taught from childhood to dwell. It is not an extravagant inference to suppose that centuries of [228] this imaginative and sentimental habit have ended by affecting the brain and the physical nature of humanity. Man has become a woman-caressing animal. The life of the two sexes is made to centre round the once fictitious, but now universal, idea that they cannot exist without one another.

Goose and gander have lost their primitive conception of an individual and independent career, and are never happy unless they are permitted to go in pairs. Under less complex social conditions such interdependence led to no very intolerable results. Men and women formed a sort of convenient partnership, each contributing their quota of daily conveniences to the common fund. The chief protected his squaw—or, if he was a patriarch, his squaws—while the squaws ministered to his pleasures, cooked his food, milked—if Mr. Max Müller's idea of the Sanscrit is correct—his cows, and carried his babies on their backs. The husband found the venison and the maize, while his wife dressed it and helped to eat it. This mutual arrangement had at any rate the advantage of being accommodated to the physical differences of strength between the two halves of society.

A little tyranny is the natural consequence of an unequal distribution of physical strength in all rude and barbarous states, and it was inevitable that woman should at such times have more than her share of labor and of patience imposed upon her. But it is evident that, as civilization has increased with the growth of population and of industrial interests, women no longer derive the same benefit from the social partnership as formerly. Some social philosophers still maintain, [229] with M. Comte, that it is man's business to maintain woman, and to relieve her from the necessity of providing for her natural wants. But this theory seems Utopian and impracticable when we try to think of applying it to the world in which we live. Wealth is no longer distributed with the least reference to industrious and sober habits.

The principle of accumulation has been admitted, and social bodies have encouraged and sanctioned it by allowing property to descend from one generation to another intact, the result of which is that the industry of the father is able to insure the perpetual idleness of his posterity. Large multitudes of poor producers are occupied in earning their own necessary sustenance, and cannot take on themselves without enormous difficulty the burden of supporting womankind, a burden which the richer classes scarcely feel. As by far the majority of women belong to the impoverished and laborious class, it is obvious they must either enter the labor-market themselves, or purchase support from the rich by sacrifices which are inconsistent with their personal dignity and the morality of the social body. As the imagination of humanity has been long since given up to sentiment and passion, it is only too clear that the more vicious alternative is the one oftenest embraced. Society, then, has come to this—that woman must still depend on man, while man no longer, except on his own terms, fulfills his part of the tacit bargain by maintaining woman.

The first thing to be considered is what the public gains by keeping up the sentimental notion [230] about woman's mission. It is her business, most of us think, to charm and to attract, partly in order that she may do man real good, and partly that she may add to the luxury, the refinement, and the happiness of life. With this view, society is very solicitous to keep her at a distance from everything that may spoil or destroy the bloom of her character and tastes. Few people go so far as to say that she ought not to work for her livelihood, if her circumstances render the effort necessary and prudent. As a fact, we see at once that such a proposition cannot be broadly

supported, and that any attempt to enforce it would lead to endless misery and mischief. Poor women, for example, must work hard, or else their children and themselves will come to utter degradation.

But though society abstains from committing itself to the doctrine of the enforced idleness of women, it takes refuge in a species of half measure, and restricts, as far as it can, by its legislative enactments or its own social code, the labors which women are to perform to the narrowest possible compass. A woman may work, but she must do nothing which is called unfeminine. She may get up linen, ply her needle, keep weaving-machines in motion, knit, sew, and in higher spheres in life teach music, French, and English grammar. She may be a governess, or a sempstress, or even within certain limits may enter the literary market and write books. This is the extreme boundary of her liberty, and somewhere about this point society begins to draw a rigid line.

It earnestly discourages her from commercial occupations, except under the patronage of a husband who is to benefit by her exertions; she is not to be a counting-house clerk, or a doctor, or a lawyer, or a parson. The great active avocations, all those that lead either to fame or fortune, are monopolized by men. Strong-minded women occasionally bore the public by complaining of and protesting against such restrictions; but, on the whole, the public is satisfied that it is convenient that they should be upheld. If we look at the matter from the point of view of the educated, or even the well-to-do classes, such a conclusion seems so reasonable that most of us can hardly induce ourselves to doubt its correctness. Women do a certain tangible amount of good to the world by being kept as a luxury and exotic. The most energetic and rebellious of them may feel angry to be told so, but it is the truth that it suits men in general to keep up a kind of hothouse bloom upon the characters of women. The society of soft, affectionate, unselfish creatures is decidedly good for man. It elevates his nature, it gives him a belief in what is pure and genuine, it alleviates the dust and turmoil of a busy career, and it enables him for so many hours of the day to refresh himself with the company of a being who is in some things a mediæval saint, and in some, a child. [231]

Whenever one contemplates the effect of more coarse experience of the world, more knowledge, and more rough and hard work on such a nature, one is invariably tempted to acquiesce in the view that it is good for man to have her in the state she is. One feels disposed to object to notions of female emancipation as profane. Education and science, thought and philosophy, like the winds of heaven, should never visit her cheek too roughly. The great thing is, to preserve in her that sort of luxurious unworldliness which represents the religious and refined element in the household to which she belongs. And a hundred things may be and have often been said about the advantage of making pure sentiment the foundation of all the relations that obtain between her and man. [232]

As Plato thought, man elevates himself by elevating and sentimentalizing his affections. All poetry and most literature is given up to this sentimentalizing or refining process. Nor can it be denied that the effect is to increase very much the capacity of happiness in all people who are born to be happy or to enjoy life. What would youth be without its imaginative emotions? We all know, and are taught to believe, that it would be something much poorer than it is.

There is another side to the picture, and it is as well to contemplate it seriously, before we make up our minds to treat with undisguised contempt all the vagaries of those who wish definitely to alter the social condition of women. At present women are beautiful and delicate adjuncts of life. As Prometheus said of horses, they are the ornaments of wealth and luxury. They add perfume and refinement to existence. But, after all, it is an important question whether the conversion of women into this sort of drawing-room delicacy is not sacrificing the welfare of the many to the intellectual and social comfort of the few. [233]

The world pays a heavy price for having its imagination sentimentalized. One of the items in the bill is the disappointment of the thousands whose sensibilities are never destined to be satisfied. For every woman who marries happily, a large percentage never marry at all, or marry in haste and repent at leisure. It remains to be proved that it is wise to teach and train the sex to fix all their views in life and to stake all their fortunes on the chance of the one rare thing—a lucky matrimonial choice. If one could succeed in de-sentimentalizing society, one would take from a few the chief pleasure of living, but it is far from certain that the material welfare of the majority would not be proportionately increased. Half-measures would of course be of very little use.

It would be a poor exchange to take from women all their reserve and innocence and refinement, without giving them free play in the world. They would be only coarse and wicked caricatures of what they are now. The change, to be tolerable, would have to be effectual and thorough. It would be necessary to change the whole current of their ideas, and the whole view of man about them also; to persuade the human race to fix its mind less on the difference of sexes, and to become less imaginative upon the subject. If so sweeping an alteration could be completely effected, perhaps it might be worth while to consider whether woman's absolute independence would not strengthen her character, and add permanently to the world's natural wealth. [234]

One thing is certain, that if woman is to continue for ever in her present condition, the moral and social condition of large numbers of human beings must remain hopeless. Their future appears dreary in the extreme. It is Utopian to expect that men and women will grow less and less self-indulgent, so long as the education they undergo from their earliest years renders them prone to every species of temptation. There are some things which make social philosophers hopeful and confident, but no social philosopher can ever do anything but despair of real progress if he is to

take for granted that women are always to play the part in life which they at present play. The emancipation of the goose is an experiment, but it is not surprising that many enthusiasts should believe it to be an experiment well deserving of a trial.

ENGAGEMENTS.

[235]

A great writer has pathetically described the last days of a man under sentence of death. He has found appropriate expression for every phase of the protracted agony with characteristic richness and variety of language; we are made to taste each drop in the bitter cup—the remorse and the awful expectation, and the desperate clinging to deceitful straws of hope. Indeed it scarcely requires the eloquence of a first-rate writer to impress upon us the fact that it is very unpleasant to expect to be hanged. Every man's imagination is sufficient to realize some of the unpleasant consequences of such a state of mind; for though the number of persons who have encountered this particular experience is inconsiderable, most of us have gone through something more or less analogous—we have been significantly told to wait after school, or have paid visits to dentists, or have been candidates at competitive examinations, or have been engaged to be married. These and many other situations, though varying in the intrinsic pain or pleasure of the anticipated event, have thus much in common, that they are all states of abnormal suspense. The nerves are kept in a state of equal tension by the uncomfortable feeling that we are in for it, whatever the "it" may turn out to be.

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The first impression is simple; it resembles that felt by a man who has just slipped upon the side of a mountain, and knows that he is inevitably going to the bottom. He has not time to think whether he will fall upon snow or rocks, whether he will have merely a pleasant slide or be dashed into a thousand fragments; he does not make up his mind to be heroic or to be frightened; the one thought that flashes across his mind is that here at last is the situation which he has so often feebly pictured to himself; he will know all about it before he has time to reflect upon its pains or pleasures. People who have escaped drowning sometimes assert that they have remembered their whole lives in a few instants, though it does not quite appear how they can remember that they remembered the series of incidents without remembering the incidents themselves. But, so far as we have been able to collect evidence, the general rule in any sudden catastrophe is that which we have described. There is nothing but a dazzling flash of surprise, which almost excludes any decided judgment as to the painfulness or otherwise of the situation.

If, then, we may venture to conjecture the frame of mind in which a lady or gentleman first enters upon an engagement, we should say that it was this sense of startled suspense. They feel as Guy Faux would have felt after lighting the train of gunpowder—that they have done something which they may probably never repeat in their lifetime, and every other emotion will be for the moment absorbed. But as engagements are generally more protracted than most of the critical situations [237] we have mentioned, the surprise dies away, and the victims have time to look about them, and analyze more closely the emotions produced by their position. To do any justice to the complicated and varying frame of mind into which even an average lover may be thrown in the course of a few weeks would of course require the pen, not of men, but of angels. It would involve a condensation of a large fraction of all the poetry that has been written in the world, and no small part of the cynical criticism by which it has been opposed. But, taking for granted the mass of commonplaces which has been accumulated in the course of centuries, there are a few special modifications of the position under our present social arrangements which are more fitted for remark. The state of mind known as being in love is confined to no particular race or period, but the position of the engaged persons may vary indefinitely. In a good simple state of society, the gentleman pays down his money or his sheep or his oxen, and takes away the lady without any superfluous sentiment. Even in more civilized states, a marriage may be substantially a bargain carried out in a business-like spirit. However unsatisfactory such a mode of proceeding may be from certain points of view, it is at any rate intelligible; all parties to the contract understand their relative positions, and have a plain line of conduct traced for them.

But in a modern English engagement the form is necessarily different, even when the substance of the arrangement is identical. For once in his experience a man feels called upon to accept that [238] view of life for which novelists are unjustly condemned. We say unjustly, for it is inevitable that a novelist should frequently represent marriage as being the one great crisis of a man's history. It is not his function to give a complete theory of life, but to describe such scenes as are most interesting and most dramatic. He is quite justified in often writing as though two lovers should really think about nothing under heaven except their chances of union, and should be dismissed, when the happy event has once taken place, in a certainty of living very happily ever afterwards. He has no concern with the lover's briefs or sermons or operations on the Stock Exchange, which may really take up by far the greater part of the man's waking thoughts; and it would spoil the unity of his work if he were to dwell upon them proportionately. It would be as absurd to mistake the novelist's views for a complete one as to condemn it because it is incomplete. In novels which depend, as ninety-nine out of a hundred must depend, upon a love story, the importance of marriage, or at least the degree in which it occupies the thoughts of the characters, will necessarily be overstated. The engaged persons, however, find that, in the eyes of their friends, if not in their own, they are temporarily accepting the novelist's ideal. For the time they are considered exclusively as persons about to marry, and all their other relations in life retire into the background.

The difficulty of the position depends upon the extent to which this conventional assumption [239] diverges from the true facts of the case. The lady, for example, suffers less than the gentleman, because, in spite of Dr. Mary Walker and other martyrs to the cause of woman's rights, it is still true that marriage fills a larger space in her life than in that of the other sex. She can take up the character with a certain triumph, as of one who has more or less fulfilled her mission and passed from the ranks of the aspirants to those of the successful candidates for matrimony. At any rate, even if she takes a loftier view of feminine duties, there is nothing ridiculous about her position. She may busy herself about trousseaux or wedding-dresses or marriage-presents, with perfect satisfaction to herself and to the envy of her female friends. But her unfortunate accomplice, especially if he is of mature age, is in a far more uncomfortable position.

Few men who have become immersed in any profession or business can act the character without an unpleasantly strong sense of being in a false position. There is nothing indeed intrinsically ludicrous about it; the chances are that the lover is doing a very sensible thing, and that his wisest friends approve of his conduct. Still it is undeniable that he moves about, to his own apprehension at least, in a universal atmosphere of ridicule. He feels that he is really a quiet hard-working young man, full of law it may be, or of plans for improving his parish, or of Parliamentary notices of motion. He can talk about his own topics with interest and intelligence, and may possibly be an authority in a small way. He is quite conscious, too, that there are many [240] sides to his character which do not come out in his ordinary every-day business. Unluckily that is just the fact which his friends are apt to ignore.

We soon learn to associate our acquaintance with the positions in which we have been accustomed to see them, and forget that they may have sentiments and faculties of which we know nothing. Consequently an engagement seems to imply an entire metamorphosis. Our friend, or his image in our minds, was a comparatively simple compound of two or three characters at most; whereas men generally have a far more complex organization. In business hours, perhaps, he was simply a machine for grinding out law, and at other times a lively talker and a good whist-player. No process of transmutation will convert either of those into the conventional lover, who can think of nothing but the object of his affections; the apparent incongruity is too violent not to produce a sense of the ludicrous; and our friend is bound in decency to make it as violent as possible. From which it follows that we laugh, and that he knows that we are laughing, at him. Intensely awkward congratulations are exchanged, according to two or three formulas which have been handed down from distant generations. If the congratulator is a married man, he hopes that his friend may enjoy as much happiness as he has found himself in the married state; if a bachelor, he assures him that, although unable hitherto to act up to his principles, he has always thought marriage the right thing. There are persons who can repeat one of these common [241] forms with all the air of making an original observation, as there are men who can begin an oration by asserting that they are unaccustomed to public speaking; but, as a rule, it is said in such a way as to imply that the speaker, whilst admitting the absurdity of connecting the ideas of his friend and marriage, is willing to pay the necessary compliments, if he may do it as cheaply as possible.

In short, until a man is engaged to be married, he scarcely knows how narrow a view his friends take of his character, and how easily they are amused at what is after all rather a commonplace proceeding. When his own friends look upon him so distinctly in the light of a joke, he of course cannot expect much quarter from the friends of the lady. He has a painful impression that he is coming out in a part for which he has had no practice, under the eyes of hostile critics. Every man thinks it only due to himself to criticise a friend's new purchases of horses or pictures or wines; if he did not find fault with them he would miss an opportunity of establishing his superior acumen. And of course the principle extends to lovers. There is probably a narrow circle who are bound officially to approve; but the unfortunate victim feels that, outside of it, every acquaintance of the lady will take pleasure in a keen observation of his defects, and he trembles accordingly. It is said (rather unfairly, perhaps) that shyness is a form of conceit; but the least self-conscious of mankind can hardly fail to feel uncomfortable when he is called upon to perform [242] such a highflown part under so severe a scrutiny.

Of course the torment is far greater in the case of a middle-aged professional gentleman, who is habitually employed upon some incongruous work, than to a youth in whom any sort of folly is graceful; but there can be few persons to whom the position is not to a certain extent irksome. When a man is married, or when he is a bachelor, he is allowed to be a rational being, taking rational views of life. He feels it rather hard that in the interval society insists upon his being in a state of temporary insanity, and then laughs at him because it doesn't look natural. He begins to long even for that climax of misery when, if the custom be not already dead, he will have to commit one of the most absurd actions of which a human being can be guilty—namely, making a speech in the morning, at an anomalous and dreary meal, exactly when his shamefacedness is at its highest pitch. That so many people survive engagements without any perceptible sourness of temper is some proof of the goodness of human nature, or of the fact that there are compensations in the state of being in love which go to neutralize the discomfort of being engaged.

WOMAN IN ORDERS. [243]

There is, no doubt, something extremely flattering to our insular conceit in the mystery which hangs about the institutions which we prize as specially national. We feel that a Briton is still equal to three Frenchmen, so long as the three Frenchmen confess with a shrug that the Briton is wholly unintelligible. The blunders of Dr. Döllinger, the baffled wonderment with which every foreigner retires from the study of it, only endear to us the more the Church of England. This was perhaps the reason, besides the inherent marvel of the matter, why we passed so lightly over M. Esquiroz and his late ecclesiastical researches. It was humiliating to English pride to have to confess that a Frenchman had unveiled to the world of Paris the hitherto sacred mysteries of the perpetual curate and of the tithe rent-charge.

The enemy was clearly at the gates of the central fortress of British insularism; even an American bishop was tempted to strive to understand Westminster Abbey; and a dismal rumor prevailed that nothing hindered the Ecclesiastical Commissioners from revealing the nature and purpose of their existence but the fact that, after prolonged inquiry, they found it impossible to understand them themselves. It was time, we felt, to abandon these mere outposts of the unintelligible to the [244]
aggressions of an impertinent curiosity, and to retire to the citadel. There, happily, we are safe. Even the unhallowed inquisitiveness of M. Esquiroz recoils baffled from the parson's wife. Disdainful of all artificial adjuncts of mystery, to all appearance a woman like other women, packing her little sick-baskets, balancing the coal-club accounts, teaching in her Sunday-school, the centre of religion, of charity, and of tittle-tattle, woman in orders fronts calmly the inquirer, a being fearfully and wonderfully English, unknowable and unknown.

No one who saw for the first time the calm, colorless serenity of the parson's wife would discover in her existence the result of a life-long disappointment. But the parson on whose arm she leans commonly represents to his spouse simply the descent from the ideal to the real, the step from the sublime to the prosaic, if not the ridiculous. There was a moment in her life when the vestry-door closed upon a world of hallowed wonder, when the being who appeared in white robes, "mystic, wonderful," was a being not as other men are, a being whose hours were spent in study, in meditation, in charity, a being of beautiful sermons and spotless neckties. The flirtation with him, so impatiently longed for, was not as other men's flirtations; there was a tinge of sacredness about his very frivolity, and a soft touch of piety in his sentiment. To share such a life, to commune hourly with a spirit so semi-angelic, seemed an almost religious ambition. The spirit of a Crusader, half-heaven, half-earth, fired the gentle breast of the besieger till Jerusalem was won. [245]

Then came the hour of disenchantment. The mysterious object of adoration, seen on his own hearth-rug, melted into the mass of men. The spiritual idealist was cross over an ill-cooked dinner, and as commonplace at breakfast as his *Times*. The discourses, so lately utterances from heaven, dwindled into copies or compilations from other heavenly utterers. The life of a Lady Bountiful turned out a dull routine of mothers' meetings and Sunday-schools. The ideal poor, grateful and resigned, proved cross and greedy old harridans. The world of peace, of nobleness, of serenity, died into a parish of bustle and scandal and worry. Out of this wreck of hope arises the parson's wife. Disillusionment is her ordination for a clerical position none the less real that it is without parallel in the ecclesiastical history of the world.

She takes her part with all the decision of genius. Her first step is to restore the Temple she has broken down, to set up again the Dagon who lies across the threshold. If not for herself, at any rate for the world and for her children, she re-creates the priest she once dreamt of in the commonplace parson whom she has actually wedded. Conscious as she is of the inner nature of the idling apartment where he lounges through the morning, she impresses on the household the necessity of quiet while its master is in his "study." By the daily addition of skillful but minute touches, she paints him to the world as an ideal of piety and of learning. She takes bills and letters off his hands, that his mind may not be disturbed from more serious subjects. She [246]
enforces a sacred silence throughout the house during the solemn hours while the sermon is being compiled. She sews the sacred sheets together, and listens while the discourse is recited for her approval. She listens again with an interest as fresh as ever when it is preached. She marks the text in her Bible, and sees that the children mark it too.

As the first subject of his theological realm, she sets an example which other subjects are to follow. They, like her, mingle their contempt for the parson's business abilities and voluble talk with a hushed reverence for his esoteric knowledge of subjects inaccessible to common men. They, like her, manage to combine a perfect readiness to snub him and his opinions on all earthly topics, with an equal readiness to listen to him, as to a divine oracle, on the topics of grace and free-will. Insensibly the subtle distinction tells on the parson himself. He is conscious, perhaps pleasantly conscious, that he is seen through the glass of his wife, and seen therefore darkly. He retires within the domestic veil. He learns to avoid common subjects—subjects, that is, where the world holds itself at liberty to criticise him. He retires to fields where he is above criticism. He believes at last in the vamped-up sermons in which his wife persists in believing. He accepts the position of an oracle on sacred topics which his wife has made for him. In a word, the parson's wife has created the British parson.

It is hard to say how far the creator believes in her own creation. In persuading others, she [247]
probably succeeds to a great extent in persuading herself. At any rate she accepts willingly enough the consequences of a position which leaves her the master of the parish. In the bulk of cases the parson is simply the Mikado, the nominal ruler, lapped in soft ease, and exempt from the worry of the world about him. Woman is the parochial Tycoon, the constitutional premier who does not rule, but governs. She is the hidden centre and force of the whole parochial machinery—the organist, the chief tract distributor, the president of the Dorcas society, the despot of the

penny bank and the coal-club, the head of the sewing-class, the supervisor of district-visitors, the universal referee as to the character of mendicant Joneses and Browns. In other words, the parson's wife has revived an Apostolic Order which but for her would have died away; she has restored the primitive Diaconate.

Woman is the true parochial deacon, and not the bashful young gentleman fresh from Oxford, who wears his stole over one shoulder rather than over two. It is the parson's wife who "serves tables" nowadays; and the results on parochial activity are in some ways remarkable enough. In the first place, men are fairly driven from the field. If a layman wishes to help in a parish he finds himself lost in a world of women. It is only those semi-clerical beings who seem to unite with a singular grace all the weaknesses of both the sexes who persist in the attempt. Then, too, all the ideas of the parochial world become feminine; the parish buzzes with woman's hatred of the [248] Poor-laws, and contempt for economic principles and hard-hearted statisticians.

Mendicancy flies from the workhouse and the stone-yard to entrench itself against Guardians and relieving-officers among the soup-kitchens and the coal-tickets of feminine almsgiving. The parson, after a faint protest of common sense, surrenders at discretion, and flings all experience to the winds. One wife turns her husband into a fount of begging letters. Another forces him to set up manufactories for all the lucifer-match girls of the parish. Woman's imaginativeness, woman's fancy, woman's indifference to fact exhausts itself in "sensational cases," and revels in starvation and death. But we must turn to a brighter side of her activity. Ritualism is the great modern result of the parson's wife, though, with a base ingratitude to the rock from which they were hewn, Ritualists hoist the standard of clerical celibacy. Woman has long since made her parson; now (as of old with her doll) her pleasure is to dress him. A new religious atmosphere surrounds her life when the very work of her hands becomes hallowed in its purpose. The old crotchet and insertion—we use words to us more mysterious than intelligible—become flat, stale, and unprofitable by the side of the book-marker and the colored stole; and a flutter of excitement stirs even the stillness of a life which is sometimes offensively still at the sight of the new chasuble with "aunt's real lace, you know, dear," sewn about it.

However gray an existence may be, and the tones of a life like this are naturally subdued, it still [249] cherishes within a warmth and poetry of its own; and the poetry of the parson's wife breaks out in vestments and decorations. Nothing brings out more vividly the fact that Mrs. Proudie *is* the Church of England than that her reaction against the prose of existence is shaking—so the Protestant Alliance tells us—the Church of England to its foundations. The real disturber of the Church peace, the real assertor of Catholic principles, or (for those who prefer a middle phrase to either of these contending statements) the real defendant in the Court of Arches, is not Mr. Mackonochie, but the parson's wife.

Mrs. Proudie, we repeat, is the Church of England; but if it is difficult to estimate the results of her position upon the spouse of her bosom and the parish which she rules, it is still harder to estimate its results upon herself. Her outer manner seems, indeed, to reflect what we have ventured to call the gray tones of her life, and a certain weariness of routine breaks out even in the mechanical precision of her existence. Power, in the parochial as in the domestic circle, is bought by her at the cost of a perpetual self-abnegation, and it is a little hard to be always hiding the hand that pulls the strings. We may excuse a little forgetfulness in a wife when her daily sacrifice is wholly forgotten in the silver teapot and the emblazoned memorial which proclaim the borrowed glories of her spouse.

Sometimes there may be a little justification for the complaint of the British priestess that the [250] priest alone should be crowned with laurel. But, if she is ecclesiastically forgotten, it must be remembered that her position receives a shy and timid recognition from society. She is credited with a quasi-clerical character, and regarded as having received a sort of semi-ordination. The Church, indeed, assigns her no parochial precedence; but public opinion, if it sets her beneath her husband, places her above all other ecclesiastical agencies. Tacitly she is allowed to have the right to speak of "*our* curates." Then, again, society assigns her a sort of mediatorial position between the Church and the world; she is the point of transition between the clergy and their flocks. It is through her that the incense of congregational flattery is suffered to mount up to the idol who may not personally inhale it; and it is through her that the parson can intimate his opinion, and scatter his hints on a number of social subjects too trivial for his personal intervention.

It is impossible, indeed, to express in words the delicate shades of her social position, or, what is yet more remarkable, the relation to her sister-world of woman. There can be no doubt that, taken all in all, women are a little proud of the parson's wife. She is, as it were, the tithe of their sex, taken and consecrated for the rest. The dignity of her position in close proximity to the very priesthood itself extends, by the subtle gradation of sisters of mercy, district-visitors, and tract-distributors, to women in the mass. Her influence is a quiet protest against the injustice of the [251] present religions of the world in excluding woman from those ministerial functions with which Paganism invested her. It is an odd transition from the quiet parson's wife to the priestess of Delphi; but while the parson's wife exists there is at any rate a persistence in the claim of woman's right to resume her tripod again.

It is the quiet consciousness of this, of her spiritual headship of her sex, of her mystic and unexpressed but real ecclesiastical position, quite as much as the weariness of her daily routine, which displays itself in the bearing of the parson's wife. She is not quite as other women are, any more than he is as other men. Her dress is—at any rate, in theory it ought to be—a shade quieter,

her bonnets a little less modern, her manner a trifle more reserved, her mirth hardly as unrestrained as those of the rest of her sex. Her talk, without being clerical, takes a quiet clerical tinge. She has her little scandal about the archdeacon and her womanly abhorrence of that horrid Colenso. She knows Early English from Middle Pointed, and interprets Ritualistic phrases into intelligible vocables. Like the curate, she dances only in family circles, and then dances after a discreet and ecclesiastical sort. She has no objection to cards, but she plays only for love. She sings solos from the *Messiah* and *St. Paul*.

An existence simple, kindly enough in its way, penetrating society no doubt with a thousand good influences, but yet, we must own, hardly very interesting to the priestess who lives it. Altogether, when we get beyond the purple and gold of our rulers, we congratulate ourselves on being free [252] from the tedium and weariness and perpetual self-restraint of their lofty position. And even the curate who has lately raised his faint protest against what he calls "feminine domination" may remember in charity that while croquet and flirtation remain to him, his existence, slavery though he deem it, is a slavery far freer, blither, and more lively than that of the curate's wife.

WOMAN AND HER CRITICS. [253]

We men boast, as Homer said, to be braver than our fathers; but, as a sort of compensation, our women are far more sensitive than their grandmothers. Phyllis has ceased to laugh at Mr. Spectator's criticisms on her fan and her patches; but then it may be doubted whether Phyllis ever did laugh very heartily at Mr. Spectator. Women have run through all the list of moral and intellectual qualities in their time, but we do not remember an instance of a really humorous woman. Witty women there have been, and no doubt are still in plenty, but the world has still to welcome its feminine Addison.

The higher a man's nature, the keener seems his enjoyment of his own irony and mockery of his own foibles; but did any woman ever seriously sit down to write a "Roundabout Paper?" Women, we are generally told, are "especially self-conscious;" in fact, the whole theory of women, philosophically stated, from the shyness of the miss in her 'teens to the audacious flirtation of a heroine of the season, rests wholly on the assumed basis of "self-consciousness." But it is self-consciousness of a very peculiar and feminine sort—a consciousness, not of themselves in themselves, but of the reflection of themselves, in others, of the impression they make on the [254] world around. Woman, we suspect, lives always before her glass, and makes a mirror of existence. But for downright self-analysis, we repeat, she has little or no taste. A female Montaigne, a female Thackeray, would be a sheer impossibility.

We have been led, as the *Spectator* would have said, into these reflections by the chorus of shrill indignation with which the world of woman encounters the slightest comment of extraneous critics. The censor is at once told flatly that he knows nothing of woman. He is a bachelor, he is blighted in love, he is envious, spiteful; he is blind, deaf, dumb. All this goes without saying, as the French have it, but he is certainly ignorant. The truth is, it is woman who knows nothing of herself. It is only self-analysis which reveals to us our inner anomalies, our ridiculous self-contrasts; it is humor which recognises and amuses itself with their existence. But it is just the absence of this sense of anomaly in her nature or her life that is the charm of woman.

Christmas has been bringing us, among its other festivities, a few of those delightful amusements called private theatricals; and in private theatricals all are agreed with Becky Sharpe, that woman reigns supreme. We were present the other day at an entertaining little comedy of this kind, where the whole interest of the piece was absorbed by a fascinating widow and an intriguing attorney, and where both these parts were sustained with singular ability and success. The amateur who played the lawyer seized the general idea of his *rôle* with perfect accuracy; in [255] four minutes it was admirably rendered to his audience, but in four minutes it was exhausted. The preliminary cough, the constant angularity of attitude in the midst of perpetual fidget, the indicative finger from which the legal remarks seemed to pop off as from a pocket-pistol, were grasped at once, and remained unvaried, undeveloped to the close. The very ability with which the actor rendered the inner unity of legal existence, the very fidelity with which he represented the lawyer as a class, denied to him the subtle charm of the only unity which life as a representation exhibits—the charm of a unity of outer impression arising out of perpetual inner variety.

His feminine rival won her laurels just because she made no attempt to grasp any general idea at all, but abandoned herself freely to the phases of the character as it encountered the various other characters of the piece. Whether as the frivolous widow or the daring coquette, as the practical woman of business or the unprotected female, as the flirt in her wildest extravagance or the wife in her most melting moods, she aimed at no artistic unity beyond the general unity of sex. She remained simply woman, and all this prodigious versatility was, as the audience observed, "so charmingly natural," just because it is woman's life. "On the stage," if we may venture to apply the lines about Garrick:—

> On the stage she is natural, simple, affecting—
> It is only that when she is off she is acting.

In actual fact she is acting whether off the boards or on, but the mere existence in outer [256]

impressions, in the unity of a constant admiration, which critics applaud as natural on the stage, they are unreasonably hard upon in general society.

A man on the boards is doing an unusual and exceptional thing, and as a rule the very effort he makes to do it only enhances his failure; but a woman on the boards is only doing, under very favorable circumstances, what she does every day with less notice and applause. There can be no wonder if she is "charmingly natural," but this naturalness depends, as we have seen, on the entire absence of what in men is called self-consciousness—that is, the sense of anomaly. When a critic then ventures to open this inner existence, and to give woman a peep at herself, we cannot be astonished at the scream of indignation which greets his efforts. But we may be permitted to repeat that the scream proves, not that he knows nothing of woman, but that woman knows nothing of herself.

We are afraid, however, that all this feminine resentment points to a radical defect in the mind of woman, which she is alternately proud to acknowledge and resolute to deny. Frenchmen of the Thiers sort have a trick to which they give the amusing name of logic; they present their reader with a couple of alternatives which they assert divide the universe, and bid you choose "of these two one." But any ordinary woman presents to the observer a hundred distinct alternatives, and defies him to choose any one in particular. There is no special reason, then, for astonishment at [257] the coolness with which she sets herself up one moment as a "deductive creature," as one who attains the highest flights of knowledge by intuition rather than by reason, and the next poses herself as the one specially rational being in her household, and waits patiently till her husband is reasonable too.

We are sometimes afraid that neither one nor the other of these theories will hold water, and feel inclined to agree with one of the most brilliant of her sex that, if woman loves with her head, she thinks with her heart. As a rule, certainly, she judges through her affections. She does not praise nor blame; she loves or hates. The one thing she cannot understand is a purely intellectual criticism, the sort of morbid anatomy of the mind which treats its subject as a mere dead thing simply useful for demonstration. Very naturally, she attributes the same spirit of affectional intelligence to her critics as to herself; and when they unravel a few of her inconsistencies, amuse themselves with a few follies, or even venture to point out a few faults, she brands them as "hating" or "despising" woman. Point, too, is given to the charge by the fact that these affections through which she lives are from their very nature incapable of dealing with qualities, and naturally transform them into persons. A woman does not love her lover's courage or truth or honor; she loves her lover. If she prizes his qualities at all it is simply because they are inherent in him, and so she gives herself very little trouble to distinguish between his bad qualities and his good ones. She considers herself bound to defend his characteristics in the mass, and if she seem [258] to give up his extravagance or his rakishness, it is only with a secret determination that this concession to the world shall be balanced by an increase of adoration at home.

As she deals with mankind, so she expects mankind, and especially the mankind of criticism, to deal with her. It is in vain that her censor replies that he only blamed her bonnet-strings or attacked the color of her shoe-tie. Woman's answer is that he has attacked woman. This folly, that absurdity, are in woman's mind herself, and their assailant is her own personal antagonist. "Love me all in all or not at all" is a woman's song, not in Mr. Tennyson's *Idyl* only, but all the world over. The discriminating admiration, the constitutional obedience which still claims to preserve a certain reticence and caution in its loyalty, are more alien to woman's feelings than the refusal of all worship, all obedience whatever. "Picking her to pieces" is the phrase in which she describes the critical process against which she revolts, and it is a phrase which, in a woman's mouth, is the prelude to the bitterest warfare.

There is a more amiable, if a hardly more intelligent, trait in woman's character which renders her singularly averse to all criticism. Men can hardly be described as loyal to men. Whether it be their exaggerated self-esteem, their individuality, or their reason, it is certain that they do not imagine the honor of their sex to be concerned in the conduct of each particular member of it. The lawyer laughs over a little gentle fun when it is poked at his neighbor the vicar, and the [259] parson has his amusement out of the exposure of the foibles of his friend the attorney. What they never dream of is the flinging over each other's defects the general cloak of manhood, and rallying at every smile of criticism under the general banner of the sex.

But woman, in front of the enemy, piques herself on her *solidarité*. Flirt or prude, prim or gay, foolish or wise, woman, once criticised, cries to her sisters, and is recognised and defended as woman. All feminine comment, all internal censure, is hushed before the foe. The tittle-tattle of the gossips, the social intrigues of the dowager, are adopted as frankly as the self-devotion of a Miss Nightingale. The door of refuge is flung open as widely for the foolish virgins as for the wise. All distinctions of age, of conduct, of intelligence, of rank are annihilated or forgotten in the presence of the enemy. Every fault is to be defended, every weakness to be held stoutly against his attacks. "No surrender" is the order of the day. It is only when the criticism of the outer world withdraws that woman's internal criticism recommences. This is, indeed, half the offence of outer assailants, that they suspend and injure the working of that inner discipline which woman exerts over woman. Mrs. Proudie, it has been said, is the Church.

Women certainly present the only analogy in the present day to that claim of internal jurisdiction for which the Church struggled so gallantly in the middle ages. No one who sees the serried ranks with which she encounters all investigation from without would imagine the severity with [260] which she administers justice within. Like the Westphalian Vehm-gericht, the mystery of feminine

courts is only equalled by their terrible sentences. Mrs. Grundy on the seat of justice is a Rhadamanthus to whom criticism may fairly leave an erring sister. But all this in nowise weakens the firmness of woman's attitude before an outer foe. She claims absolute right to all hanging, drawing, and quartering on her domains. Like a feudal baron, she will yield to no man her stocks and her gallows. But to judge from the prim front of her squares, the cordial grasp of hand-in-hand with which they form to resist all masculine charges, no one would imagine the ruthless severity with which woman was breaking some poor drummer-boy inside.

We are bound, however, to add, that in all our remarks we have only been nibbling at the outer rind of a great difficulty. Woman has characteristically fallen back on a grand principle, and has asserted her absolute immunity from all criticism whatever. It is not merely that this critic is deaf or that critic malignant, that one censor is ignorant and another basely envious of woman. All this special pleading is totally flung aside, and the defence stands on a basis of the most uncompromising sort. No man, it is asserted, can judge woman, because no man can understand her. She is the Sphinx of modern investigation, and man is not fated to be her Œdipus. We can conceive of few announcements more welcome, if it be only true.

In an age when everything seems pretty well discovered, when one cannot preserve even a shred of mystery to cloak the bareness of one's life, when the very surface of the globe is all mapped out, and the mysterious griffins of untraversed deserts are vanishing from the map, it is an amazing relief to know that an unsolved, nay more, that an insoluble, mystery is standing on one's very hearth-rug. No wonder great philosophers have spent their lives in vain in looking for the riddle of existence, when they never dreamt of looking for it at home. Why woman is so peculiarly mysterious, why the laws of her nature are so specially unintelligible to a common world, we have not yet been informed. What is asserted is simply the fact of this mystery, and before that great fact criticism retires. [261]

All that remains for it is to pray and to wait, to hope for a revelation from within, since it is forbidden any exploration from without. Some prophetess, no doubt a veiled prophetess herself, will arise to lift the veil of her sex. Woman, let us hope, will at last unriddle woman. Smit by the sunbeams, or rather by the moonbeams, of self-discovery, the Sphinx of modern times will reveal in weird and superhuman music the mystery of her existence.

MISTRESS AND MAID ON DRESS AND UNDRESS. [262]

No one with a soul to appreciate the extra-judicial utterances of Mr. Samuel Warren can have forgotten the memorable lament over the decline and fall of the fine old English maid-servant with which, some years ago, he introduced some cases of petty larceny to the notice of the grand-jurors of Hull. The alarm sounded with such touching eloquence from the judgment-seat was taken up last autumn, if we remember, by a venerable Countess, who, in an address to an assemblage of Cumbrian lasses, aspirants to the kitchen and the dairy, took occasion to read them a lecture on the duty of dressing with the simplicity befitting their station. Both the learned Recorder and the venerable Countess were animated by the best intentions. Their advice was excellent, and we sincerely trust that it may have induced the neat-handed Phyllis of the North to curb her immoderate taste for finery. These sporadic warnings seem likely to ripen at last into action.

From a letter lately inserted in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, we learn that a "Clergyman's Wife" has long been brooding in silent indignation over "the present disgraceful style of dress among female servants." Her disgust finds vent in a manifesto to the mistresses of Great Britain, in which, after painting the evil in the darkest possible colors, she ends by suggesting a remedy for it. Dress, we are told, among "the lower orders of females," has arrived at a pitch which has wholly changed the aspect and character of our towns and country villages. Neither preachers nor good books can avail to stop it. Bad women are fearfully increased in number, good wives and mothers are getting rare. In consequence of the reckless expenditure of women upon their dress, husbands become drunkards, and murder too commonly follows. The remedy for this terrible state of things is to be found in the following "proposition:"—The ladies of England are to form an association, pledging themselves to adopt, each family for themselves, a uniform for their female servants, and to admit none into their service who refuse to wear it. [263]

The uniform is not to be old-fashioned or disfiguring, but merely neat, simple, and consequently becoming. The following ornaments are to be absolutely prohibited—"feathers, flowers, brooches, buckles or clasps, earrings, lockets, neck-ribbons and velvets, kid-gloves, parasols, sashes, jackets, Garibaldis, all trimming on dresses, crinoline, or steel of any kind." No dress to touch the ground. No pads, frisettes, no chignons, no hair-ribbons. Having swept away by a stroke of the pen all this mass of finery, a "Clergyman's Wife" goes on to make some "suggestions," which we quote for the edification of our lady readers:—

"Morning dress: Lilac print, calico apron, linen collar. Afternoon dress: Some lighter print, muslin apron, linen collar and cuffs. Sundays: a neat alpaca dress, linen collar and cuffs, or frill tacked into the neck of the dress, a black apron, a black shawl, a medium straw bonnet with ribbons and strings of the same color, a bow of the same inside, and a slight cap across the forehead, thread or cotton gloves, a small cotton or alpaca umbrella to keep off sun and rain. The winter Sunday dress: Linsey dress, shepherd's plaid shawl, black straw bonnet. A plain brown or black turndown [264]

straw hat with a rosette of the same color, and fastened on with elastic, should be possessed by all servants for common use, and is indispensable for nursemaids walking out with children. Should servants be in mourning, the same neat style must be observed—no bugles, or beads, or crape flowers allowed."

The first thing that strikes us in connection with this glib project is the enormous difficulty of carrying it into execution. It is easy, we all know, to call spirits from the vasty deep, but exceedingly difficult to induce them to obey the summons. It is easy, and to feminine ingenuity rather pleasant than otherwise, to devise sumptuary laws for the kitchen. But it is quite another thing to try to enforce them. By what coercive machinery is Betsy Jane to be forced into the detested uniform? We know how deeply the Anglo-Saxon mind resents any social "ticketing." Does a "Clergyman's Wife" suppose that the British housemaid is exempt from this little weakness common to her race? At any rate, we are convinced that she would never subside into a [265]
"lilac print" or a "neat alpaca" without a tremendous struggle. Her first weapon of defence would infallibly be a strike. It is absurd to suppose that she would cling to her flowers and parasol with less tenacity than cabby to his right of running over people in the dark.

Now, is a "Clergyman's Wife" prepared to face the consequences of such a strike? Is she ready for an indefinite time to cook her own dinner, mend her own dresses, dust her own rooms, manage her own nursery? What if the vengeance of the housemaid menaced by the imposition of a "calico apron" or a "medium straw bonnet" should assume a darker form, and a system of domestic "rattening" should spread terror through the tranquil parsonages of England? Is she prepared to brave the system of intimidation by which a union of vindictive cooks and nursery-maids might assert their inherent rights to lockets and earrings? Has she the nerve to crush the secret plots of kitchen Fenianism? Ultimately, no doubt, her efforts might be crowned with success. When that happy time arrived, when "her suggestions were generally adopted," and the "requirements of ladies, especially those of fortune, were generally known" to comprise a uniform for the maid-servant, she might succeed in closing the market of domestic service to the flaunting abigail whose audacious finery renders her to the outward eye indistinguishable from her own daughters.

But as that time would be long in coming, and probably would never arrive in her lifetime, she would have to face the discomforts of a long period of transition, during which she would have to [266]
rely on herself and her daughters for the discharge of the various operations of the household. Meantime we beg to suggest another way of effecting her purpose quite as easy, and much more effectual. Why not go in for an Act of Parliament, having for its object the total suppression of the instinct of vanity in the female bosom? Let it be enacted that, on and after the 1st of next April (the date would be appropriate), feathers, flowers, and the other abominations which she seeks to proscribe, shall be for ever abjured and disused by the fair sex. As the prelude to that full entry on her social and political rights which is nowadays claimed for woman, a proposal of this magnitude would commend itself, no doubt, to the philosophic section of the House of Commons.

There is another feature in the manifesto of a "Clergyman's Wife" which calls for observation. She lays particular stress on securing the adhesion to her plan of "families of wealth and distinction," "ladies of position and fortune"—of the leaders of fashion, in short, wherever those mysterious but potent decoy-ducks are to be found. Its success depends on "making it fashionable to adopt the uniform," on making simplicity of dress among maid-servants the sole avenue to the "best situations." Now, as it is conceded that the "present disgraceful style of dress among servant girls" is the result of their ambition to imitate their superiors, it is worth while, in order to estimate both the amount of their responsibility for the said disgrace and the chances of [267]
success of the proposed reform, to glance from the style of dress in vogue in the kitchen to the style of dress in vogue in the drawing-room.

Oddly enough, on the very day on which a "Clergyman's Wife" was permitted to ventilate her project in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, the public was favored with the latest intelligence on this point, in the columns of a fashionable contemporary. Paris, we all know, is the sovereign arbiter of dress to all "ladies of position and fortune" in this country, the center of an authority on all matters relating to the toilette, which radiates, through "families of distinction and wealth," to those calm retreats where clergymen's wives, in chastely severe attire, exchange hospitalities with their neighbors. What is the fashionable style of dress in Paris at the present moment? The correspondent of our contemporary shall speak for himself. "We are living," he says, "in an age which seems to be reviving the classical period in the history of drapery. You see pretty nearly as much of the female *torso* now as the Athenians did when the bas-reliefs of the Parthenon copied the modes of the Greeks so many hundred years ago, and when the multitude did not worship the drapery of the goddess only."

After some piquant remarks on the style of dress in the theatres, he goes on to inform us how "in the more refined and virtuous society" the ladies are dressing this winter. "At a *fête* graced by all that is elegant, refined, and aristocratic in Paris," he observed the duchess, the countess, and the [268]
baroness imitating the costly toilettes of the *demi-monde*, arrayed like one of them precisely, in the very height of fashion. We are favored with a minute account of one representative toilette in the room:—

"The lady is of a noble Hungarian family, fair, with that dark brown reddish hair which is just going to begin to be golden, but never shines out. Pale oval face, heavy eyebrows, bright bronze eyes. Small festoons of hair over the brow, imprisoned by a golden metal band. Behind a Bismarck chignon. A mass of twisted hair, in a sort of Laocoon agony, was decorated with small

insects (of course I don't mean anything impossible), glittering gem-like beetles from the Brazils. Three long curls hang from the imposing mass, and could be worn before or behind, and be made to perform—as I witnessed—all sorts of coquettish tricks. . . . Now for the dress. Well, there is nothing to describe till you get very nearly down to the waist. A pretty bit of lace on a band wanders over the shoulder; the back is bare very low down, and more of the bust is seen than even last year's fashions permitted. . . . You may, as far as I could observe, dress or half-dress just as you like; caprice has taken the place of uniform fashion. As the panorama of *grandes dames* floats before my mind's eye, I come to the conclusion that I have seen more of those ladies than one could have hoped or expected in so brief a space of time."

This, then, is, or shortly will be, in a tasteless and exaggerated form, the style of dress among those "ladies of distinction" whose co-operation a "Clergyman's Wife" fondly hopes to enlist in her [269] scheme for purging the kitchen of its "disgraceful" finery. It is just possible that she has not heard of these things. Perhaps in the retirement of the parsonage, with her eyes intently fixed on the moral havoc which dress is causing among "the lower orders of females," she has assumed that the dress of the higher orders of females is irreproachably modest and correct. If so, we are sorry to have to dispel an illusion which would go far to justify the self-complacent tone of her lecture. But unless she is blissfully ignorant of contemporary fashions in any sphere more elevated than the kitchen, we are struck with astonishment at the hardihood of an appeal at the present moment to ladies of fashion.

Is a being whose avowed object is to imitate as exactly as possible the cosmetic tricks of the *demi-monde* likely to prove an influential ally in a crusade against cheap finery? Is a mistress whose head-gear resembles the art-trophy of an eccentric hair-dresser, and whose clothing is described as nothing to speak of "until you get very nearly down to the waist," the person to be especially selected to preach propriety of dress to her maid? Or is it that a "Clergyman's Wife" objects to overdress only, and not to underdress; and that, while she would repress with severity any attempt on the part of "females of the lower order" to adorn their persons, she looks with a tolerant eye, among "ladies of position and fortune," upon the nude? We are curious to know at what point in the social scale she would draw the line above which an unblushing exhibition of [270] the female *torso* is decent, and below which earrings and a parasol are immoral.

As a matter of fact, so far from discouraging the passion for dress among their female dependents, ladies of position and fortune are apt to insist on their dressing smartly. They like to see some of their own lustre reflected on their attendants. A dowdy in sad-colored print or linsey is by no means to their taste. This has been well pointed out in a letter in which a "Maid-servant" replied, through the *Pall Mall Gazette*, to the project of reform proposed by a "Clergyman's Wife." Looking at the question from her own point of view, she described in plain words how, when she first went into service, she had wished to dress simply, but was quickly made to understand that she must either spend more of her wages on dress, or seek another situation. We believe that her experience would be endorsed by the great majority of her class. If a "Clergyman's Wife" would take the pains to inquire into the facts of the case, she would not be long in ascertaining from what quarter the signal for unbecoming finery among "females of the lower orders" really comes.

The plain truth of the matter is, that a reform in the dress of "lower class females," and maid-servants in particular, can only be brought about in one way. The reaction in favor of a neat and simple style must come from above, and not from below; in the way of example, not of precept. When "ladies of position and fortune" cease to lavish their thousands on millinery, their copyists [271] in the nursery and kitchen will cease to spend their wages on a similar object. When every one above the rank of a governess dresses in a manner suitable to her station, complaints will be no longer heard about "unbecoming" finery below stairs. The chief incentive to showy dress among the "lower orders of females" is unquestionably a desire to ape the extravagance of their betters. Remove that incentive, and the evil which a "Clergyman's Wife" so forcibly deplores will soon cure itself.

We hope that she may be induced to turn her reforming zeal into another direction. Instead of indulging in childish projects for putting the Sunday-school, and the church singers, and maid-servants, and the lower orders of females generally into uniforms, let her attack the mischief at its root, and persuade the fine ladies of the earth to curtail their monstrous prodigality and immodest vagaries in dress. Let her add her warning voice to that of the Head of Latin Christianity, who has recently denounced this scandal of the age with the same perennial vigor that characterizes his anathemas on the Subalpine Government.

ÆSTHETIC WOMAN. [272]

It is the peculiar triumph of woman in this nineteenth century that she has made the conquest of Art. Our grandmothers lived in the kitchen, and debased their finer faculties to the creation of puddings and pies. They spun, they knitted, they mended, they darned, they kept the accounts of the household, and scolded the maids. From this underground existence of barbaric ages woman has at last come forth into the full sunshine of artistic day; she has mounted from the kitchen to the studio, the sketching-desk has superseded the pudding-board, sonatas have banished the knitting-needle, poetry has exterminated weekly accounts. Woman, in a word, has realized her mission; it is her characteristic, she tells us through a chorus of musical voices, to represent the

artistic element of the world, to be pre-eminently the æsthetic creature.

Nature educates her, as Wordsworth sang long ago, into a being of her own, sensitive above all to beauty of thought and color, and sound and form. Delicate perceptions of evanescent shades and tones, lost to the coarser eye and ear of man, exquisite refinements of spiritual appreciation, subtle powers of detecting latent harmonics between the outer and the inner world of nature and [273] the soul, blend themselves like the colors of the prism in the pure white light of woman's organization. And so the host of Woman, as it marches to the conquest of this world, flaunts over its legions the banner of art.

In one of the occasional passages of real poetic power with which Walt Whitman now and then condescends to break the full tide of rhapsody over the eternities and the last patent drill, he describes himself as seeing two armies in succession go forth to the civil war. First passed the legions of Grant and M'Clellan, flushed with patriotic enthusiasm and hope of victory, and cheered onward by the shouts of adoring multitudes. Behind, silent and innumerable, march the army of the dead. Something, we must own, of the same contrast strikes us as we stand humbly aside to watch the æsthetic progress of woman.

It is impossible not to feel a certain glow of enthusiastic sympathy as the vanguard passes by—women earnest in aim and effort, artists, nursing-sisters, poetesses, doctors, wives, musicians, novelists, mathematicians, political economists, in somewhat motley uniform and ill-dressed ranks, but full of resolve, independence, and self-sacrifice. If we were fighting folk we confess we should be half inclined to shout for the rights of woman, and to fall manfully into the rank. As it is, we wait patiently for the army behind, for the main body—woman herself. Woman fronts us as noisy, demonstrative, exacting in her æsthetic claims. Nothing can surpass the adroitness with which she uses her bluer sisters on ahead to clear the way for her gayer legions; nothing, at any [274] rate, but the contempt with which she dismisses them when their work is done. Their office is to level the stubborn incredulity, to set straight the crooked criticisms, of sceptical man, and then to disappear. Woman herself takes their place. Art is everywhere throughout her host—for music, the highest of arts, is the art of all.

The singers go before, the minstrels follow after, in the midst are the damsels playing on the timbrels. The sister Arts have their own representatives within the mass. Sketching boasts its thousands, and poetry its tens of thousands. A demure band of maidens blend piety with art around the standard of Church decoration. Perhaps it is his very regard for the first host—for its earnestness, for its real womanhood—that makes the critic so cynical over the second; perhaps it is his very love for art that turns to quiet bitterness as he sees art dragged at the heels of foolish virgins. For art *is* dragged at their heels. Woman will have man love her for her own sake; but she loves art for the sake of man. Very truly, if with an almost sublime effrontery, she re-christens for her own special purposes the great studies that fired Raffaelle or Beethoven. She pursues them, she pays for them, not as arts, but as accomplishments. Their cultivation is the last touch added at her finishing school ere she makes her bow to the world. She orders her new duet as she orders her new bonnet, and the two purchases have precisely the same significance. She [275] drops her piano and her paint-brush as she drops her coquetries and flirtations, when the fish is landed and she can throw the bait away. Or, what is worse, she keeps them alive as little social enjoyments, as reliefs to the tedium of domestic life, as something which fills up the weary hours when she is fated to the boredom of rural existence.

A woman of business is counted a strange and remarkable being, we hardly know why. Looking coolly at the matter, it seems to us that all women are women of business; that their life is spent over the counter; that there is nothing in earth or heaven too sacred for their traffic and their barter. Love, youth, beauty, a British mother reckons them up on her fingers, and tells you to a fraction their value in the market. And the pale sentimental being at her side, after flooring one big fellow with a bit of Chopin, and another with a highly unintelligible verse of Robert Browning, poses herself shyly and asks through appealing eyes, "Am I not an æsthetic creature?"

The answer to this question is best read, perhaps, in the musical aspect of woman. Bold as the assumption sounds, it is quietly assumed that every woman is naturally musical. Music is the great accomplishment, and the logic of her schools proves to demonstration that every girl has fingers and an ear. In a wonderful number of cases the same logic proves that girls have a voice. Anyhow, the assumption moulds the very course of female existence. The morning is spent in practicing, and the evening in airing the results of the practice. There are country-houses where [276] one only rushes away from the elaborate Thalberg of midnight to be roused up at dawn by the Battle of Prague on the piano in the school-room over-head. Still we all reconcile ourselves to this perpetual rattle, because we know that a musical being has to be educated into existence, and that a woman is necessarily a musical being. A glance, indeed, at what we may call the life of the piano explains the necessity.

Music is pre-eminently the social art; no art draws people so conveniently together, no art so lends itself to conversation, no art is in a maidenly sense at once so agreeable, so easy to acquire, and so eminently useful. A flirtation is never conducted under greater advantages than amid the deafening thunders of a grand finale; the victim doomed to the bondage of turning over is chained to the fascination of fine arms and delicate hands. Talk, too, may be conducted without much trouble over music on the small principles of female criticism. "Pretty" and "exquisite" go a great way with the Italian and the Romantic schools; "sublime" does pretty universally for the German. The opera is, of course, the crown and sum of things, the most charming and social of lounges, the readiest of conversational topics. It must be a very happy Guardsman indeed who

cannot kindle over the Flower-song or the Jewel-scene. And it is at the opera that woman is supreme. The strange mingling of eye and ear, the confused appeal to every sensuous faculty, the littleness as well as the greatness of it all, echo the conclusion within woman herself. [277]

Moreover there is no boredom—no absolute appeal to thought or deeper feeling. It is in good taste to drop in after the first act, and to leave before the last. It is true that an opera is supposed to be the great creation of a great artist, and an artist's work is presumed to have a certain order and unity of its own; but woman is the Queen of Art, and it is hard if she may not display her royalty by docking the Fidelio of its head and its tail. But, if woman is obliged to content herself with mutilating art in the opera or the concert-room, she is able to create art itself over her piano. A host of Claribels and Rosalies exist simply because woman is a musical creature. We turn over the heap of rubbish on the piano with a sense of wonder, and ask, without hope of an answer, why nine-tenths of our modern songs are written at all, or why, being written, they can find a publisher.

But the answer is a simple one, after all; it is merely that æsthetic creatures, that queens of art and of song, cannot play good music and can play bad.

There is not a publisher in London who would not tell us that the patronage of musical women is simply a patronage of trash. The fact is that woman is a very practical being, and she has learned by experience that trash pays better than good music for her own special purposes; and when these purposes are attained she throws good music and bad music aside with a perfect impartiality. It is with a certain feeling of equity, as well as of content, that the betrothed one [278] resigns her sway over the keys. She has played and won, and now she holds it hardly fair that she should interfere with other people's game. So she lounges into a corner, and leaves her Broadwood to those who have practical work to do. Her *rôle* in life has no need of accomplishments, and as for the serious study of music as an art, as to any real love of it or loyalty to it, that is the business of "professional people," and not of British mothers. Only she would have her girls remember that nothing is in better taste than for young people to show themselves artistic.

Music only displays on the grand scale the laws which in less obtrusive form govern the whole æsthetic life of woman. Painting, for instance, dwindles in her hands into the "sketch;" the brown sands in the foreground, the blue wash of the sea, and the dab of rock behind. Not a very lofty or amusing thing, one would say at first sight; but, if one thinks of it, an eminently practical thing, rapid and easy of execution, not mewing the artist up in solitary studio, but lending itself gracefully to picnics and groups of a picturesque sort on cliff and boulder, and whispered criticism from faces peeping over one's shoulder. Serious painting woman can leave comfortably to Academicians and rough-bearded creatures of the Philip Firmin type, though even here she feels, as she glances round the walls of the Academy, that she is creating art as she is creating music. She dwells complacently on the home tendencies of modern painting, on the wonderful succession of squares of domestic canvas, on the nursemaid carrying children up stairs in one [279] picture, on the nursemaid carrying children down stairs in the next. She has her little crow of triumph over the great artist who started with a lofty ideal, and has come down to painting the red stockings of little girls in green-baize pews, or the wonderful counterpanes and marvellous bed-curtains of sleeping innocents. She knows that the men who are forced to paint these things growl contempt over their own creations, but the very growl is a tribute to woman's supremacy. It is a great thing when woman can wring from an artist a hundred "pot-boilers," while man can only give him an order for a single "Light of the World."

One field of art, indeed, woman claims for her own. Man may build churches as long as he leaves woman to decorate them. A crowning demonstration of her æsthetic faculties meet us on every festival in wreath and text and monogram, in exquisitely moulded pillars turned into grotesque corkscrews, in tracery broken by strips of greenery, in paper flowers and every variety of gilt gingerbread. But it may be questioned whether art is the sole aim of the ecclesiastical picnic out of which decorations spring. The chatty groups dotted over the aisle, the constant appeals to the curate, the dainty little screams and giggles as the ladder shakes beneath those artistic feet, the criticism of cousins who have looked in quite accidentally for a peep, the half-consecrated flirtations in the vestry, ally art even here to those practical purposes which æsthetic woman never forgets. Were she, indeed, once to forget them, she might become a Dr. Mary Walker; she [280] might even become a George Sand. In other words, she might find herself an artist, loving and studying art for its own sake, solitary, despised, eccentric, and blue. From such a destiny æsthetic woman turns scornfully away.

WHAT IS WOMAN'S WORK? [281]

This is a question which one half the world is asking the other half, with very wild answers as the result. Woman's work seems to be in these days everything that it was not in times past, and nothing that it was. Professions are undertaken and careers invaded which were formerly held sacred to men, while things are left undone which, for all the generations that the world has lasted, have been naturally and instinctively assigned to women to do. From the savage squaw gathering fuel or drawing water for the wigwam, to the lady giving up the keys to her housekeeper, housekeeping has been considered one of the primary functions of women. The

man to provide, the woman to dispense; the man to do the rough initial work of bread-winning, whether as a half-naked barbarian hunting live meat, or as a city clerk painfully scoring lines of rugged figures, the woman to cook the meat when got, and to lay out to the best advantage for the family the quarter's salary gained by casting up ledgers, and writing advices and bills of lading.

Take human society in any phase we like, we must come down to these radical conditions; and any system which ignores this division of labor, and confounds these separate functions, is of necessity imperfect and wrong. We have nothing whatever to say against the professional self-support of women who have no men to work for them, and who must therefore work for themselves in order to live. In what direction soever they can best make their way, let them take it. Brains and intellectual gifts are of no sex and no condition, and it is far more important that good work should be done than that it should be done by this or that particular set of workers. [282]

But we are speaking of the home duties of married women, and of those girls who have no need to earn their daily bread, and who are not so specially gifted as to be driven afield by the irrepressible power of genius. We are speaking of women who cannot help in the family income, but who can both save and improve in the home; women whose lives now are one long day of idleness, *ennui*, and vagrant imagination, because they despise the activities into which they were born, while seeking outlets for their energies impossible to them both by nature and social restrictions.

It is strange to see into what unreasonable disrepute active housekeeping—woman's first natural duty—has fallen in England. Take a family with four or five hundred a year—and we know how small a sum that is for "genteel humanity" in these days—the wife who will be an active housekeeper, even with such an income, will be an exception to the rule; and the daughters who will be anything more than drawing-room dolls waiting for husbands to transfer them to a home of their own, where they may be as useless as they are now, will be rarer still. For things are getting worse, not better, and our young women are less useful even than their mothers; while these last do not, as a rule, come near the good housekeeping ladies of olden times, who knew every secret of domestic economy, and made a point of honor of a wise and pleasant "distribution of bread." [283]

The usual method of London housekeeping, even in the second ranks of the middle-classes, is for the mistress to give her orders in the kitchen in the morning, leaving the cook to pass them on to the tradespeople when they call. If she is not very indolent, and if she has a due regard for neatness and cleanliness, she may supplement her kitchen commands by going up stairs through some of the bedrooms; but after a kind word of advice to the housemaid if she is sweet-tempered, or a harsh word of censure if she is of the cross-grained type, her work in that department will be done, and her duties for the day are at an end. There is none of the clever marketing by which fifty per cent. is saved in the outlay if a woman knows what she is about, and how to buy; none of the personal superintendence so encouraging to servants when genially performed, and rendering slighted work impossible; none of that "seeing to things" herself, or doing the finer parts of the work with her own hands, which used to form part of a woman's unquestioned duty. She gives her orders, weighs out her supplies, then leaves the maids to do the best they know or the worst they will, according to the degree in which they are supplied with faculty or conscience. Many women boast that their housekeeping takes them perhaps an hour, perhaps half an hour, in the morning, and no more; and they think themselves clever and commendable in proportion to the small amount of time given to their largest family duty. This is all very well where the income is such as to secure first-class servants—professors of certain specialities of knowledge, and far in advance of the mistress; but how about the comfort of the house with this hasty generalship, when the maids are mere scrubs who would have to go through years of training before they were worth their salt? It may be very well too in large households governed by general system, and not by individual ruling; but where the service is scant and poor, it is a stupidly uncomfortable as well as a wasteful way of housekeeping. It is analogous to English cookery—a revolting poverty of result with flaring prodigality of means; all the pompous paraphernalia of tradespeople, and their carts, and their red-books for orders, with nothing worth the trouble of booking, and everything of less quantity and lower quality than might be if personal pains were taken, which is always the best economy practicable. [284]

What is there in practical housekeeping less honorable than the ordinary work of middle-class gentlewomen? and why should women shrink from doing for utility, and for the general comfort of the family, what they would do at any time for vanity or idleness? No one need go into extremes, and wish our middle-class gentlewomen to become Cinderellas sitting among the kitchen ashes, Nausicaäs washing linen, or Penelopes spending their lives in needlework only. But, without undertaking anything unpleasant to her senses or degrading to her condition, a lady might do hundreds of things that are now left undone in a house altogether, or are given up to the coarse handling of servants, and domestic life would gain infinitely in consequence. [285]

What degradation, for instance, is there in cookery? and how much more home happiness would there not be if wives would take in hand that great cold-mutton question! But women are both selfish and small on this point. Born for the most part with very feebly developed gustativeness, they affect to despise the stronger instinct in men, and think it low and sensual if they are expected to give any special attention to the meals of the man who provides the meat. This contempt for good living is one cause of the ignorance there is among them of how to secure good living. Those horrible traditions of "plain roast and boiled" cling about them as articles of culinary faith; and because they have reached no higher knowledge for themselves, they decide

that no one else shall go beyond them.

For one middle-class gentlewoman who understands anything about cookery, or who really cares for it as a scientific art or domestic necessity, there are ten thousand who do not; yet our mothers and grandmothers were not ashamed to be known as deft professors, and homes were happier in proportion to the respect paid to the stewpan and the stockpot. And cookery is more interesting [286] now than it was then, because more advanced, more scientific, and with improved appliances; and, at the same time, it is of confessedly more importance. It may seem humiliating, to those who go in for spirit pure and simple, to speak of the condition of the soul as in any way determined by beef and cabbage; but it is so, nevertheless, the connection between food and virtue, food and thought, being a very close one; and the sooner wives recognise this connection the better for them and for their husbands.

The clumsy savagery of a plain cook, or the vile messes of a fourth-rate confectioner, are absolute sins in a house where a woman has all her senses, and can, if she will, attend personally to the cooking. Many things pass for crimes which are really not so bad as this. But how seldom now do we find a house where the lady does look after the cooking, where clean hands and educated brains are put to active service for the good of others! The trouble would be too great in our fine-lady days, even if there was the requisite ability; but there is as little ability as there is energy, and the plain cook with her savagery, or the fourth-rate confectioner with his rancid pastry, have it all their own way, according to the election of economy or ostentation.

If by chance one stumbles on a household where the woman does not disdain housewifely work, and specially the practical superintendence of the kitchen, there we may be sure we shall find cheerfulness and content. There seems to be something in the life of a practical housekeeper that [287] answers to the needs of a woman's best nature, and that makes her pleasant and good-tempered. Perhaps it is the consciousness that she is doing her duty—of itself a wonderful sweetener of the nature; perhaps the greater amount of bodily exercise keeps the liver in good tone; whatever the cause, sure it is that the homes of the active housekeepers are more harmonious than those of the feckless and do-nothing sort. Yet the snobbish half of the middle-classes holds housewifely work as degrading, save in the trumpery pretentiousness of "giving orders."

A woman may sit in a dirty drawing-room which the slipshod maid has not had time to clean, but she must not take a duster in her hands and polish the legs of the chairs; there is no disgrace in the dirt, only in the duster. She may do fancy work of no earthly use, but she must not be caught making a gown. Indeed very few women could make one, and as few will do plain needlework. They will braid and embroider, "cut holes, and sew them up again," and spend any amount of time and money on beads and wools for messy draperies which no one wants; the end, being finery, sanctions the toil and refines it; but they will not do things of any practical use, or if they are compelled by the exigencies of circumstances, they think themselves petty martyrs, and badly used by the fates.

The whole scheme of woman's life at this present time is untenable and unfair. She wants to have all the pleasures and none of the disagreeables. Her husband goes to the city, and does [288] monotonous and unpleasant work there; but his wife thinks herself in very evil case if asked to do monotonous housework at home. Yet she does nothing more elevating or more advantageous. Novel-reading, fancy-work, visiting, letter-writing, sum up her ordinary occupations; and she considers these more to the point than practical housekeeping. In fact it becomes a serious question what women think themselves sent into the world for, what they hold themselves designed by God to be or to do. They grumble at having children, and at the toil and anxiety which a family entails; they think themselves degraded to the level of servants if they have to do any practical housework whatever; they assert their equality with man, and express their envy of his life, yet show themselves incapable of learning the first lesson set to men, that of doing what they do not like to do. What, then, do they want? What do they hold themselves made for?

Certainly some of the more benevolent sort carry their energies out of doors, and leave such prosaic matters as savory dinners and fast shirt-buttons for committees and charities, where they get excitement and *kudos* together. Others give themselves up to what they call keeping up society, which means being more at home in every person's house than their own; and some do a little weak art, and others a little feeble literature; but there are very few indeed who honestly buckle to the natural duties of their position, and who bear with the tedium of home work as men bear with the tedium of office work. The little royalty of home is the last place where a woman [289] cares to shine, and the most uninteresting of all the domains she seeks to govern. Fancy a high-souled creature, capable of æsthetics, giving her mind to soup or the right proportion of chutnee for the curry! Fancy, too, a brilliant creature foregoing an evening's conversational glory abroad for the sake of a prosaic husband's more prosaic dinner! He comes home tired from work, and desperately in need of a good dinner as a restorative; but the plain cook gives him cold meat and pickles, or an abomination which she calls hash, and the brilliant creature, full of mind, thinks the desire for anything else rank sensuality.

It seems a little hard, certainly, on the unhappy fellow who works at the mill for such a return; but women believe that men are made only to work at the mill that they may receive the grist accruing, and be kept in idleness and uselessness all their lives. They have no idea of lightening the labor of that mill-round by doing their own natural work cheerfully and diligently. They will do everything but what they ought to do; they will make themselves doctors, committee-women, printers, what not, but they won't learn cooking, and they won't keep their own houses. There never was a time when women were less the helpmates of men than they are at present; when

there was such a wide division between the interests and the sympathies of the sexes in the endeavor, on the one side, to approximate their pursuits.

There is a great demand made now for more work for woman, and wider fields for her labor. We confess we should feel a deeper interest in the question if we saw more energy and conscience put into the work lying to her hand at home, and we hold that she ought to perform perfectly the duties instinctive to her sex before claiming those hitherto held remote from her natural condition. Much of this demand, too, springs from restlessness and dissatisfaction; little, if any, from higher aspirations or nobler unused energies. Indeed, the nobler the woman the more thoroughly she will do her own proper work, in the spirit of old George Herbert's well-worn line, and the less she will feel herself above her work. It is only the weak who cannot raise their circumstances to the level of their thoughts; only the poor who cannot enrich their deeds by their thoughts. [290]

That very much of this demand for more power of work comes from necessity and the absolute need of bread, we know; and that the demand will grow louder as marriage becomes scarcer, and there are more women left adrift in the world without the protection and help of men, we also know. But this belongs to another part of the subject. What we want to insist on now is the pitiable ignorance and shiftless indolence of most middle-class housekeepers; and we would urge on woman the value of a better system of life at home, before laying claim to the discharge of extra-domestic duties abroad.

PAPAL WOMAN. [291]

The wonderful instinct which has always guided the Papacy in distinguishing between forces that it may safely oppose and forces before which it must surrender, has just received a startling illustration in a scene reported to have taken place at the Vatican a few days ago. Rome may refuse all compromise with Italy, but even Rome shrinks from encountering the hostility of woman. The Brief of October last sounded, indeed, marvellously like a declaration of war; even in a Pope it argued no little resolution to denounce the "license of the female toilet," the "fantastic character of woman's head-dress," and the "scandalous indecency" of woman's attire. More worldly critics would hardly have ventured to describe a piquant chignon or a suggestive boddice as "a propaganda of the devil;" it will be long, at any rate, before censors of this class will meet with the reward of a deputation and a testimonial from the fair objects of their criticism.

St. Peter, however, we are adroitly reminded, after his miraculous delivery from prison by an angel, found an asylum among women; and, fresh from his troubles with the red-shirts of Monte Rotondo, the successor of St. Peter seems to have found himself wonderfully at home among the flounces that thronged the other day to his public audience at the Vatican. A hundred ladies—the presence amongst whom of a number of English Catholics gives us a national interest in the scene—came forward to express their gratitude for the censures of the Papal Briefs, and the adhesion of their sex to the orthodox doctrines of the toilet. The speech in which one of the fair deputation expressed the sentiments of her fellows has been unfortunately suppressed, but the letter of Pope Pius to the Bishop of Orleans explains the secret of this dramatic reconciliation, and the terms of the Concordat which has been arranged between Woman and the Papacy. [292]

A common danger has driven the two Powers to this fresh alliance. If Garabaldi threatens the supremacy of the Holy See, the educational reforms of M. Duruy menace the domestic tyranny of woman. Woman sees herself in peril of deposition at home by the same spirit of democratic and intellectual equality which would drive the Pope from the Vatican. In presence of such a peril, mutual concession becomes easy, and the fair votaries pardon all references to their "propaganda of the devil" in consideration of a Papal assault on the "cynical writers who are desirous of attacking woman."

The motive of the Papacy, in opposing a system of education which emancipates woman from the intellectual control of the priesthood and plunges her into the midst of the doubts and questionings of sceptical man, is of course plain enough. We feel no particular surprise when the attendance of girls at the public classes of a Professor is denounced as tending to "despoil woman of her native modesty, to drag her before the public, to turn her from domestic life and duties, to puff her up with vain and false science." It is the adhesion of woman to this view of the case which puzzles us a little at first. We recall her aspirations after a higher training, and her bitter contempt for the unhappy censors who venture to remind her of certain primary truths respecting puddings and pies. [293]

But the same problem meets us in other halls than those of the Vatican. Everywhere woman poses herself as a social martyr, as the victim of conventional bonds, as reduced to intellectual torpor by the refusal of intellectual facilities and intellectual distinctions, as excluded by sheer masculine tyranny from the larger sphere of thought and action which the world presents, as chained, like Prometheus, to the rock of home by necessity and force. It is only when some amiable enthusiast is taken in by all this admirable acting, and ventures to propose a plan for her deliverance, that one finds how wonderfully contented, after all, woman is with her bonds and her prison-house.

The philosopher who comes forward with his pet theory of the enfranchisement of woman, who

recognizes the necessity for loosening the matrimonial tie, for securing to woman her property and its responsibilities, for levelling all educational differences and abolishing all social distinctions between the sexes, only finds himself snubbed for his pains. He is calmly assured [294] that home is the sphere of woman, and the care of a family the first of woman's duties; the domestic martyr of yesterday proves from Proverbs and the *Princess* that marriage is the completion of woman, and that her office is but to wed the "noble music" of her feminine nature to the "noble words" of the nature of her spouse.

In a word, woman knows her own business a great deal better than her friends. She does not believe in the intellectual equality which she is always preaching about, and when M. Duruy offers it, a shriek of horror goes up from half the mothers of France. What she does believe is that, in seeking the educational Will-o'-the-Wisp, she may lose the solid pudding of domestic supremacy, and domestic supremacy is worth all the sciences in the world. Her position, as the Vatican suggests, is a religious, not an intellectual one, and her policy lies in an alliance with the priesthood, whose position is one with her own. So woman makes her submission to the Papacy, and the Pope snubs M. Duruy.

It is amusing to see how limited, after all, a man's power, the power even of the stoutest of men, is in his own house, and to watch the simple process by which woman establishes the limitation. It consists simply in asserting a specially religious character for her sex. She is never tired of telling us that the sentiments and sympathies of the feminine breast have a greater affinity for divine things than the rougher masculine nature; that her instincts are purer, more poetic, more refined; that her moral nature has a certain bloom upon it which contact with the world has [295] brushed off from ours; that while we coarser creatures are driven to reason out our spiritual conclusions, she arrives at them by an intuitive process reserved for the angelic nature and her own.

And on the whole man accepts the claim. He is bribed perhaps into allowing it by his own desire to have something at home better and purer than himself. It is a startling thing perhaps to say, but in ninety-nine homes out of a hundred real humility of heart is to be found in the husband, not in the wife. The husband has very little belief in his own religion, in his unworldliness and spirituality; but he has an immense belief in the spirituality and the devotion of the being who fronts him over the breakfast-table. He does not profess to understand the character of her piety, her lore of sermons, the severity with which she visits the household after family prayers, or the extreme interest with which she peruses the geographical chapters of the Book of Joshua. But his incapacity to understand it is mixed with a certain awe. He never ventures to disturb, by "shadowed hint" of his own thoughts about the matter, the "simple views" of his spouse. He adroitly diverts the conversation of his dinner-table when it drifts near to the fatal pigeons of Colenso.

Sometimes he bends to a little gentle deceit, and wins a smile of approval by turning up at an early Litany, or by bringing home the newest photograph of a colonial metropolitan. In one way or another he practically acknowledges, like King Cnut, that there is a bound to his empire. Over [296] bonnet bills and butchers' bills he may exercise a certain nominal control. It is possible that years of struggle might enable him to alter by half an inch the length of his wife's skirt, if fashion had not shortened it in the interval. But over the whole domain of moral and religious thought and action he is absolutely powerless. Woman meets him, if he attempts any interference, as Christian martyrs have always met their persecutors, with outstretched neck and on her knees. She prays for his return to better thoughts, and the whole household knows she is praying for him. She listens to all his remonstrances, professes obedience on every point but the one he wants, and keeps her finger all the time on the particular page of Thomas à Kempis at which the remonstrance found her. Before such an adversary, there is no shame in a defeat.

It is not that on all points of moral or religious life woman professes herself above criticism; to the criticisms of her religious teachers, for instance, we have seen her singularly obsequious. Woman and the priesthood in fact understand one another perfectly, and a tacit convention forces woman to submit to censures so long as those censures are reserved for one topic alone. To religion woman makes the sacrifice of her dress. It is not that she seriously intends to make the slightest amendments, or to withdraw before the exhortations of her spiritual guide into poke bonnets and print muslins. It is a sufficient mark of self-sacrifice if she listens patiently to a diatribe against butterfly bonnets, trains, or crinolines, or even thanks her pastor for describing [297] evening costume as a "propaganda of the devil." The very minuteness, in fact, of censures such as these, is a flattering proof of the spiritual importance of even the most trivial details in the life of woman.

When Father Ignatius informed mankind that the angels bent down from heaven to weep over the flirtations of Rotten Row, the smallest child on her pony felt her ride, and her chatter over her palings, invested with certain celestial importance. Criticisms, too, so strictly reserved for the outside of the platter, are an immense compliment to the inside, and it is something to listen to half an hour of spiritual reproof, and to be able to pass oneself triumphantly as a "Fair Soul" after all. There is nothing revolutionary in a mere border-skirmish, which leaves the field of woman's sway not an inch the narrower. It is another matter when M. Duruy calls on Hermione to come down from her pedestal of worship, and in the long run to abdicate. For equality of education would, of course, even if it did nothing else, make mince-meat of the spiritual pretensions of woman. It would be impossible to preserve a domestic Papacy with a more than papal weakness for dogmatism and infallibility, if woman is to come down into school and share the common training of men.

If women are to be educated precisely as men are educated, they will share the reasonings, the scepticisms, the critical doubts of men. There will be no refuge for praying sisters in that world of "simple views" from which they come forth at present furnished with a social and domestic [298] decalogue whose sacredness it is impious to doubt or to dispute. In other words, the power which woman now exercises will simply crumble to dust. Whether she might gain a power higher and more beneficial to the world and to herself, is a matter which we are not now discussing. What is perfectly certain is that such a power would not be the power she exercises now. The moral censorship of woman over woman, for example, would at once pass away. It rests on the belief that women have higher moral faculties than other beings, and that their treason to this higher form of moral humanity which is exhibited in womanhood is a treason of deeper dye than an offence against morality itself.

An erring sister sins against something greater than goodness—she sins against the theory of woman, against the faith that woman is a creature who soars high above the weaknesses of man and the common nature of man. Long ages of self-assertion have penetrated woman with the conviction of her worth; she is the object of her own especial worship, and the sharp stinging justice she deals out to social offenders is not merely a proof of the spiritual nature of her rule, but the vindication of her self-idolatry. Again, she would forfeit the peculiar influence which she is every day exerting in a greater degree on the course of religion and the Church. The hypothesis of a superior spiritual nature in woman lies at the root, for instance, of the great modern institution of sisterhoods, and of the peculiar relation which is slowly attaching his Paula [299] and his Eustochium to every Jerome of our day.

But the main loss of power would lie in the family itself. It would be no longer possible to front the political dogmatist of the hearth-rug with a social and religious dogmatism as brusque and unreasonable as his own. The balance of power which woman has slowly built up in home would be roughly disturbed, and new forms of social and domestic life would emerge from the chaos of such a revolution. From sweeping changes of this sort the very temper of woman, her innate conservatism, her want of originative power, turns her away. It is more comfortable to bask in the glow of Papal sunshine, to figure in Allocutions from the Vatican as "the pure and shining light of the house, the glory of her husband, the education of her family, a bond of peace, an emblem of piety;" and to let Monsieur Duruy and his insidious Professors alone.

MODERN MOTHERS. [300]

No human affection has been so passionately praised as maternal love, and none is supposed to be so holy or so strong. Even the poetic aspect of the instinct which inspires the young with their dearest dreams does not rank so high as this, and neither lover's love nor conjugal love, neither filial affection nor fraternal, comes near the sanctity or grandeur of the maternal instinct. But all women are not equally rich in this great gift; and, to judge by appearances, English women are at this moment particularly poor. It may seem a harsh thing to say, but it is none the less true—society has put maternity out of fashion, and the nursery is nine times out of ten a place of punishment, not of pleasure, to the modern mother.

Two points connected with this subject are of growing importance at this present time—the one is the increasing disinclination of married women to be mothers at all; the other, the large number of those who, being mothers, will not, or cannot, nurse their own children. In the mad race after pleasure and excitement now going on all through English society the tender duties of motherhood have become simply disagreeable restraints, and the old feeling of the blessing attending the quiver full is exchanged for one expressive of the very reverse. With some of the [301] more intellectual and less instinctive sort, maternity is looked on as a kind of degradation; and women of this stamp, sensible enough in everything else, talk impatiently among themselves of the base necessities laid on them by men and nature, and how hateful to them is everything connected with their characteristic duties.

This wild revolt against nature, and specially this abhorrence of maternity, is carried to a still greater extent by American women, with grave national consequences resulting; but though we have not yet reached the Transatlantic limit, the state of the feminine feeling and physical condition among ourselves will disastrously affect the future unless something can be done to bring our women back to a healthier tone of mind and body. No one can object to women declining marriage altogether in favor of a voluntary self-devotion to some project or idea; but, when married, it is a monstrous doctrine to hold that they are in any way degraded by the consequences, and that natural functions are less honorable than social excitements. The world can get on without balls and morning calls, it can get on too without amateur art and incorrect music, but not without wives and mothers; and those times in a nation's history when women have been social ornaments rather than family home-stays have ever been times of national decadence and of moral failure.

Part of this growing disinclination is due to the enormous expense incurred now by having children. As women have ceased to take any active share in their own housekeeping, whether in [302] the kitchen or the nursery, the consequence is an additional cost for service, which is a serious item in the yearly accounts. Women who, if they lived a rational life, could and would nurse their children, now require a wet-nurse, or the services of an experienced woman who can "bring up

by hand," as the phrase is; women who once would have had one nursemaid now have two; and women who, had they lived a generation ago, would have had none at all, must in their turn have a wretched young creature without thought or knowledge, into whose questionable care they deliver what should be the most sacred obligation and the most jealously-guarded charge they possess.

It is rare if, in any section of society where hired service can be had, mothers give more than a superficial personal superintendence to nursery or school-room—a superintendence about as thorough as their housekeeping, and as efficient. The one set of duties is quite as unfashionable as the other, and money is held to relieve from the service of love as entirely as it relieves from the need of labor. And yet, side by side with this personal relinquishment of natural duties, has grown up, perhaps as an instinctive compensation, an amount of attention and expensive management specially remarkable. There never was a time when children were made of so much individual importance in the family, yet in so little direct relation with the mother—never a time when maternity did so little and social organization so much.

Juvenile parties; the kind of moral obligation apparently felt by all parents to provide heated and unhealthy amusements for their boys and girls during the holidays; extravagance in dress, following the same extravagance among their mothers; the increasing cost of education; the fuss and turmoil generally made over them—all render them real burdens in a house where money is not too plentiful, and where every child that comes is not only an additional mouth to feed and an additional body to clothe, but a subtractor by just so much from the family fund of pleasure. [303]

Even where there is no lack of money, the unavoidable restraints of the condition, for at least some months in the year, more than counterbalance any sentimental delight to be found in maternity. For, before all other things in life, maternity demands unselfishness in women; and this is just the one virtue of which women have least at this present time—just the one reason why motherhood is at a discount, and children are regarded as inflictions instead of blessings.

Few middle-class women are content to bring up their children with the old-fashioned simplicity of former times, and to let them share and share alike in the family, with only so much difference in their treatment as is required by their difference of state; fewer still are willing to share in the labor and care that must come with children in the easiest-going household, and so to save in the expenses by their own work. The shabbiest little wife, with her two financial ends always gaping and never meeting, must have her still shabbier little drudge to wheel her perambulator, so as to give her an air of fine-ladyhood and being too good for work; and the most indolent housekeeper, whose work is done in half an hour, cannot find time to go into the gardens or the square with nurse and the children, so that she may watch over them herself and see that they are properly cared for. [304]

In France, where it is the fashion for mother and *bonne* to be together both out of doors and at home, at least the children are not neglected nor ill-treated, as is too often the case with us; and if they are improperly managed, according to our ideas, the fault is in the system, not in the want of maternal supervision. Here it is a very rare case indeed when the mother accompanies the nurse and children; and those days when she does are nursery gala-days, to be talked of and remembered for weeks after. As they grow older, she may take them occasionally when she visits her more intimate friends; but this is for her own pleasure, not their good, and is quite beside the question of going with them to see that they are properly cared for.

It is to be supposed that each mother has a profound belief in her own nurse, and that when she condemns the neglect and harshness shown to other children by the servants in charge, she makes a mental reservation in favor of her own, and is very sure that nothing improper or cruel takes place in *her* nursery. Her children do not complain, and she always tells them to come to her when anything is amiss; on which negative evidence she satisfies her soul, and makes sure that all is right, because she is too neglectful to see if anything is wrong. She does not remember that her children do not complain because they dare not. [305]

Dear and beautiful as all mammas are to the small fry in the nursery, they are always in a certain sense Junos sitting on the top of Mount Olympus, making occasional gracious and benign descents, but practically too far removed for useful interference; while nurse is an ever-present power, capable of sly pinches and secret raids, as well as of more open oppression—a power, therefore, to be propitiated, if only with the subservience of a Yezidi, too much afraid of the Evil One to oppose him. Wherefore nurse is propitiated, failing the protection of the glorified creature just gone to her grand dinner in a cloud of lace and a blaze of jewels; and the first lesson taught the youthful Christian in short frocks or knickerbockers is not to carry tales down stairs, and by no means to let mamma know what nurse desires should be kept secret.

A great deal of other evil, beside these sly beginnings of deceit, is taught in the nursery; a great deal of vulgar thought, of superstitious fear, of class coarseness. As, indeed, how must it not be when we think of the early habits and education of the women taken into the nursery to give the first strong indelible impressions to the young souls under their care. Many a man with a ruined constitution, and many a woman with shattered nerves, can trace back the beginning of their sorrow to those neglected childish days of theirs when nurses had it all their own way because mamma never looked below the surface, and was satisfied with what was said instead of seeing for herself what was done. It is an odd state of society which tolerates this transfer of a mother's holiest and most important duty into the hands of a mere stranger, hired by the month, and never thoroughly known. [306]

Where the organization of the family is of the patriarchal kind—old retainers marrying and multiplying about the central home, and carrying on a warm personal attachment from generation to generation—this transfer of maternal care has not such bad effects; but in our present way of life, without love or real relationship between masters and servants, and where service is rendered for just so much money down, and for nothing more noble, it is a hideous system, and one that makes the modern mother utterly inexplicable. We wonder where her mere instincts can be, not to speak of her reason, her love, her conscience, her pride. Pleasure and self-indulgence have indeed gained tremendous power, in these later days, when they can thus break down the force of the strongest law of nature, a law stronger even than that of self-preservation.

Folly is the true capillary attraction of the moral world, and penetrates every stratum of society; and the folly of extravagant attire in the drawing-room is reproduced in the nursery. Not content with bewildering men's minds, and emptying their husband's purses for the enhancement of their [307] own charms, women do the same by their children, and the mother who leaves the health, and mind, and temper, and purity of her offspring in the keeping of a hired nurse takes especial care of the color and cut of the frocks and petticoats; and always with the same strain after show, and the same endeavor to make a little look a mickle. The children of five hundred a year must look like those of a thousand; and those of a thousand must rival the *tenue* of little lords and ladies born in the purple; while the amount of money spent in the tradesman-class is a matter of real amazement to those let into the secret.

Simplicity of diet, too, is going out with simplicity of dress, with simplicity of habits generally; and stimulants and concentrated food are now the rule in the nursery, where they mar as many constitutions as they make. More than one child of which we have had personal knowledge has yielded to disease induced by too stimulating and too heating a diet; but artificial habits demand corresponding artificiality of food, and so the candle burns at both ends instead of one. Again, as for the increasing inability of educated women to nurse their children, even if desirous of doing so, that also is a bodily condition brought about by an unwholesome and unnatural state of life. Late hours, high living, heated blood, and vitiated atmosphere are the causes of this alarming physical defect. But it would be too much to expect that women should forego their pleasurable indulgences, or do anything disagreeable to their senses, for the sake of their offspring. They are [308] not famous for looking far ahead on any matter, but to expect them to look beyond themselves, and their own present generation, is to expect the great miracle that never comes.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF WOMAN. [309]

If the female philosophers who plead for the emancipation of their sex would stoop from the sublimer heights of Woman's Rights to arguments of mere human expediency, we fancy they might find some of their critics disposed to listen in a more compliant mood. We can imagine a very good point being made out of the simple fact of waste, by some feminine advocate who would point out in a businesslike way how much more work the world might get through if only woman had fair play. Waste is always a pitiful and disagreeable thing, and the waste of whatever reserved power may lie at present unused in the breasts of half a million of old maids, for instance, is a thought which, with so much to be done around us, it is somewhat uncomfortable to dwell much upon. The argument, too, might be neatly enforced, just at present, by illustrations from a somewhat unexpected quarter.

The Papacy seems determined to carry out its concordat with Woman. If we are to credit the latest rumors from the Vatican, Rome has grown impatient of the class who now present themselves at her doors as candidates for canonization, and has fallen back from the obscure Italian beggars and Cochin Chinese martyrs whom she has recently delighted to honor on the [310] more illustrious names of Christopher Columbus and Joan of Arc. A little courage must have been needed for this retreat upon the past, for neither the great navigator nor the heroine found much support or appreciation in the prelates of their day; and the somewhat uncomfortable fact might be urged by the devil's advocate, in the case of the latter, that if Joan was sent to the martyr's stake, it was by a spiritual tribunal.

On the other hand, there is the obvious desirableness of showing how perfectly at one the Papacy is with the spirit of the age in this double compliment to the two primary forces of modern civilization—the democratic force of the New World, and the feminine force of the Old. The beatification of the Maid of Orleans in its most simple aspect is the official recognition, by the Papacy, of the claims of her sex to a far larger sphere of human action than has as yet been accorded to them. Woman may fairly meet the domestic admonitions of Papal briefs by this newly discovered instance of extra-domestic holiness, and may front the taunts of cynical objectors with a saintly patron who was the first to break through the outer conventionalities of womanhood.

But the figure of Joan of Arc is far more than a convenient answer to objections such as these; it is, as we have said, in itself a cogent argument for a better use of feminine energies. No life gives one such a notion as hers of the vast forces which lie hidden, and as it would seem wasted, in the present mass of women. It is impossible to be content with little projects of utilization such as [311] those which throw open to her the telegraph-office or the printing-press, or even with the more ambitious claims for her admission to the Bench or the dissecting-room, when one gets a glimpse

such as this of energies latent within the female breast which are strong enough to change the face of the world.

It is difficult to suppose that the woman of our day is less energetic than the woman of the fifteenth century, or that her piano and her workbag sum up the whole of her possibilities any more than her spinning-wheel or her sheep-tending exhausted those of the Maid of Domremy. The ordinary occupations of woman strike us in this light as mere jets of vapor, useful indeed as a relief to the volcanic pressure within, but insufficient to remove the peril of an eruption. There must be some truth in the spasmodic utterances of the fevered sibyls who occasionally bare the female heart to us in three-volume novels, and the gaiety and frivolity of the life of woman is a mere mask for the wild, tossing emotions within. It is a standing danger, we own; and besides the danger there is, as we have said, the waste and the pity of it.

A little closer examination, however, may suggest some doubt whether this waste of power is not more apparent than real. In the physical world, Mr. Grove has told us that the apparent destruction of a force is only its transformation into a force which is correlative to it; that motion, for instance, when lost is again detected in the new form of heat, and heat in that of light. But the [312]
theory is far from being true of the physical world only, and, had we space here, nothing would be easier than to trace the same correlation of forces through the moral nature of man. For waste, then, in the particular instance which is before us, we may perhaps substitute transformation.

Professing herself the most rigid of conservatives, woman gives vent to this heroic energy for which the times offer no natural outlet in the radical modifications which she is continually introducing into modern society. We overlook the manifold ways in which she is acting on and changing the state of things around us, just because we are deceived by the apparent unity with which the whole sex advances toward marriage. We forget the large margin of those who fail in attaining their end, and we act as if the great mass of unmarried women simply represented a waste and lost force. And yet it is just this waste force which tells on society more powerfully than all.

The energies which fail in finding a human object of domestic adoration become the devotional energies of the world. The force which would have made the home makes the Church. It is really amazing to watch, if we look back through the ages, the silent steady working of this feminine impulse, and to see how bit by bit it has recovered the ground of which Christianity robbed Woman. We wonder that no woman poet has ever turned, like Schiller, to the gods of old.

In every heathen religion of the Western world woman occupied a prominent place. Priestess or [313]
prophetess, she stood in all ministerial offices on an equality with man. It was only the irruption of religions from the East, the faiths of Isis or Mithras, which swept woman from the temple. Christianity shared the Oriental antipathy to the ministerial service of woman; it banished her from altar and from choir; in darker times it drove her to the very porch of its shrines. The Church of after ages dealt with woman as the Empire dealt with its Cæsars; it was ready to grant her apotheosis, but only when she was safely out of the world. It gave her canonization, and it gives it to her still, but not the priesthood. No rout could seem more complete, but woman is never greater than when she is routed.

The newly-instituted parson of to-day, brimming over with apostolic texts which forbid woman to speak in church, no sooner arrives at his parish than he finds himself in a spiritual world whose impulse and guidance is wholly in the hands of woman. Expel woman as you will, *tamen usque recurrit*. Woman is, in fact, the parish. Within, in her lowest spiritual form, as the parson's wife, she inspires and sometimes writes his sermons. Without, as the bulk of his congregation, she watches over his orthodoxy, verifies his texts, visits his schools, and harasses his sick. "Ah, Betsy!" said a sick woman to a wealthier sister the other day, "it's of some use being well off; you won't be obliged when you die to have a district-lady worriting you with a chapter." But the district-lady has others to "worrit" in life besides the sick. [314]

Mrs. Hannah More tells us exultantly in her journal how successful were her raids upon the parsons, and in what dread all unspiritual ministers stood of her visitations. And the same rigid censorship prevails in many quarters still. The preacher who thunders so defiantly against spiritual foes is trembling all the time beneath the critical eye that is watching him from the dim recesses of an unworldly bonnet, and the critical finger which follows him with so merciless an accuracy in his texts. Impelled, guided, censured by woman, we can hardly wonder if in nine cases out of ten the parson turns woman himself, and if the usurpation of woman's rights in the services of religion has been deftly avenged by the subjugation of the usurpers. Expelled from the Temple, woman has simply put her priesthood into commission, and discharges her ministerial duties by deputy.

It was impossible for woman to remain permanently content with a position like this; but it is only of late that a favorable conjuncture of affairs has enabled her to quit it for a more obtrusive one. The great Church movement which the *Apologia* has made so familiar to us in its earlier progress came some ten years ago to a stand. Some of its most eminent leaders had seceded to another communion, it had been weakened by the Gorham decision, and by its own internal dissensions. Whether on the side of dogma or ritual, it seemed to have lost for the moment its old impulse—to have lost heart and life.

It was in this emergency that woman came to the front. She claimed to revive the old religious [315]
position which had been assigned to her by the monasticism of the middle ages, but to revive it

under different conditions and with a different end. The mediæval Church had, indeed, glorified, as much as words could glorify, the devotion of woman; but once become a devotee, it had locked her in the cloister. As far as action on the world without was concerned, the veil served simply as a species of suicide, and the impulses of woman, after all the crowns and pretty speeches of her religious counsellors, found themselves bottled up within stout stone walls and as inactive as before. From this strait, woman, at the time we speak of, delivered herself by the organization of charity.

In lines of a certain beauty, though somewhat difficult in their grammatical construction, she has been described as a ministering angel when pain and anguish wring the brow; and it was in her capacity of ministering angel that she now placed herself at the Church movement and advanced upon the world. It was impossible to lock these beneficent beings up, for the whole scope of their existence lay in the outer world; but every day, as it developed their ecclesiastical position, made even their admirers recognise the wise discretion of the middle ages. Long before the Ritualists themselves, they, with a feminine instinct, had discerned the value of costume. The district visitor, whom nobody had paid the smallest attention to in the common vestments of the world, became a sacred being as she donned the crape and hideous bonnet of the "Sister." [316]

Within the new establishment there was all the excitement of a perfectly novel existence, of time broken up as women like it to be broken up in perpetual services and minute obligation of rules, the dramatic change of name, and the romantic self-abnegation of obedience. The "Mother Superior" took the place of the tyrant of another sex who had hitherto claimed the submission of woman, but she was something more to her "children" than the husband or father whom they had left in the world without. In all matters, ecclesiastical as well as civil, she claimed within her dominions to be supreme. The quasi-sacerdotal dignity, the pure religious ministration which ages have stolen from her, was quietly reassumed. She received confessions, she imposed penances, she drew up offices of devotion. Wherever the community settled, it settled as a new spiritual power.

If the clergyman of the parish ventured on advice or suggestion, he was told that the Sisterhood must preserve its own independence of action, and was snubbed home again for his pains. The Mother Superior, in fact, soon towered into a greatness far beyond the reach of ordinary parsons. She kept her own tame chaplain, and she kept him in very edifying subjection. From a realm completely her own, the influence of woman began now to tell upon the world without. Little colonies of Sisters planted here and there annexed parish after parish. Sometimes the parson [317] was worried into submission by incessant calls of the most justifiable nature on his time and patience. Sometimes he was bribed into submission by the removal from his shoulders of the burden of alms. It was only when he was thoroughly tamed that he was rewarded by pretty stoles and gorgeous vestments.

Astonished congregations saw their church blossom in purple and red, and frontal and hanging told of the silent energy of the group of Sisters. The parson found himself nowhere in his own parish; every detail managed for him, every care removed, and all independence gone. If it suited the ministering angels to make a legal splash, he found himself landed in the Law Courts. If they took it into their heads to seek another fold, every one assumed, as a matter of course, that their pastor would go too. At such a rate of progress the great object of woman's ambition must soon come in view, and the silent control over the priest will merge in the open claim to the priesthood.

It may be in silent preparation for such a claim that the ecclesiastical hierarchy are taking, year by year, a more feminine position. The Houses of Convocation, for instance, present us with a lively image of what the bitterest censor of woman would be delighted to predict as the result of her admission to senatorial honors. There is the same interminable flow of mellifluous talk, the same utter inability to devise or to understand an argument, the same bitterness and hard words, the same skill in little tricks and diplomacies, the same practical incompetence, which have been [318] denounced as characteristics of woman. The caution, the finesse, the sly decorum, the inability to take a large view of any question, the patience, the masterly inaction, the vicious outbreaks of temper which now and then break the inaction of a Bishop, may sometimes lead us to ask whether the Episcopal office is not one admirably suited for the genius of woman.

But she must stoop to conquer heights like these, and it is probable with a view to a slow ascent towards them through the ages to come that she is now moulding the mind of the curate at her will. He, we have been told, is commonly the first lady of the parish; and what he now is in theory, a century hence may find him in fact. It would be difficult even now to detect any difference of sex in the triviality of purpose, the love of gossip, the petty interests, the feeble talk, the ignorance, the vanity, the love of personal display, the white hand dangled over the pulpit, the becoming vestment and the embroidered stole, which we are learning gradually to look upon as attributes of the British curate. So perfect, indeed, is the imitation that the excellence of her work may perhaps defeat its own purpose; and the lacquered imitation of woman, "dilettante, delicate-handed," as Tennyson saw and sang of him, may satisfy the world, and for long ages prevent any anxious inquiry after the real feminine Brummagem.

THE FUTURE OF WOMAN. [319]

Woman is a thing of accident and spoilt in the making says the greatest of the schoolmen, but we are far from denying her right to vindicate something more than an accidental place in the world. After all that can be urged as to the glory of self-sacrifice, the greatness of silent devotion, or the compensations for her want of outer influence in the inner power which she exerts through the medium of the family and the home, there remains an odd sort of sympathy with the woman who asserts that she is every bit as good as her master, and that there is no reason why she should retire behind the domestic veil. Partly, of course, this arises from our natural sympathy with pluck of any sort; partly, too, there is the pleasure we feel in a situation which may be absurd, but which, at any rate, is novel and piquant; partly, there is an impatience with woman as she is, and a sort of lingering hope that something better is in store for her.

The most sceptical, in fact, of woman's censors cannot help feeling a suspicion that, after all, strong-minded women may be in the right. As one walks home in the cool night-air it seems impossible to believe that girls are to go on for ever chattering the frivolous nonsense they do [320]
chatter, or living the absolutely frivolous lives they do live. And, of course, the impression that a good time is coming for them is immensely strengthened if one happens to have fallen in love. One's eyes have got a little sharpened to see the real human soul that stirs beneath all that sham life of idleness and vanity, but the vanity and the idleness vexes more than ever. If we come across Miss Hominy at such moments, we are extremely likely to find her a great deal less ridiculous than we fancied her, and to listen with a certain gravity to her plea for the enfranchisement of women.

It is not that we go all lengths with her; we stare a little perhaps at the logical consequences on which she piques herself, and at the panorama of woman as she is to be which she spreads before us, at the consulting barrister waiting in her chambers and the lady advocate flourishing her maiden brief; our pulse throbs a little awkwardly at the thought of being tested by medical fingers and thumbs of such a delicate order, and we hum a few lines of the *Princess* as Miss Hominy poses herself for a Lady Professor. Still we cannot help a half conviction that even this would be better than the present style of thing, the pretty face that kindles over the news of a fresh opera and gives you the latest odds on the Derby, the creature of head-achy mornings, of afternoons frittered on lounges, and bonnet-strings, of nights whirled away in hot rooms and chatter on stairs. There are moments, we repeat, when, looking at woman as she is, we could [321]
almost wish to wake the next morning into a world where all women were Miss Hominys.

But when we do wake we find the world much what it was before, and pretty faces just as indolent and as provoking as they were, and a sort of ugly after-question cropping up in our minds whether we had exactly realized the meaning of our wish, or conceived the nature of a world in which all women were Miss Hominys. There is always a little difficulty in fancying the world other than we find it; but it is really worth a little trouble, before we enfranchise woman, to try to imagine the results of her enfranchisement, the Future of Woman. In the first place, it would amazingly reduce the variety of the world. As it is, we live in a double world, and enjoy the advantages of a couple of hemispheres. It is an immense luxury for men, when they are tired out with the worry and seriousness of life, to be able to walk into a totally different atmosphere, where nothing is looked at or thought about or spoken of in exactly the same way as in their own.

When Mr. Gladstone, for instance, unbends (if he ever does unbend), and, weary of the Irish question, asks his pretty neighbor what she thinks of it, he gets into a new world at once. Her vague idea of the Irish question, founded on a passing acquaintance with Moore's Melodies and a wild regret after Donnybrook fair, may not be exactly adequate to the magnitude of the interests involved, but it is at any rate novel and amusing. It is not a House of Commons view of the subject, but then the great statesman is only too glad to be rid of the House of Commons. [322]
Thoughtful politicians may deplore that the sentimental beauty of Charles I. and the pencil of Vandyke have made every English girl a Malignant; but after one has got bored with Rushworth and Clarendon, there is a certain pleasure at finding a great constitutional question summarily settled by the height of a sovereign's brow.

It is a relief too, now and then, to get out of the world of morals into the world of woman; out of the hard sphere of right and wrong into a world like Mr. Swinburne's, where judgment goes by the beautiful, and where red hair makes all the difference between Elizabeth and Mary of Scotland. Above all, there is the delightful consciousness of superiority. The happiness of the blessed in the next world consists, according to Sir John Mandeville, in their being able to behold the agonies of the lost; and half the satisfaction men have in their own sense and vigor and success would be lost if they could not enjoy the delicious view of the world where sense and energy go for nothing.

Whether all this would be worth sacrificing simply to acquire a woman who could sympathize with, and support, a man in the stress and battle of life, is a question we do not pretend to decide; but it is certain that the enfranchisement of woman would be the passing of a social Act of Uniformity, and the loss of half the grace and variety of life. Here, as elsewhere, "the low sun makes the color," and the very excellences of Miss Hominy carry her aloft into regions of white [323]
light, where our eyes, even if dazzled, get a little tired with the monotony of the intellectual Haze.

The result of such a change on woman herself would be something far greater and more revolutionary. It is not merely that, as in the case of men, she would lose the sense and comfort of another world of thought and action, and of its contrast with the world in which she lives; it is that she would lose her own world altogether. Conceive, for instance, woman obliged to take life in earnest, to study as men study, to work as men work. The change would be no mere

modification, but the utter abolition of her whole present existence. The whole theory of woman's life is framed on the hypothesis of sheer indolence. She is often charming, but she is always idle. There is an immense ingenuity and a perfect grace about her idleness; the efforts, in fact, of generations of cultivated women have been directed, and successfully directed, to this special object of securing absolute indolence without either the inner tedium or the outer contempt which indolence is supposed to bring in its train.

Woman can always say with Titus, "I have wasted a day," but the confession wears an air of triumph rather than regret. A world of trivial occupations, a whole system of social life, has been laboriously invented that the day might be wasted gracefully and without boredom. A little riding, a little reading, a little dabbling with the paint-brush, a little strumming on the piano, a little visiting, a little shopping, a little dancing, and a general trivial chat scattered over the whole, [324] make up the day of an English girl in town. Transplant her into the country, and the task of frittering away existence, though it becomes more difficult, is faced just as gallantly as before. Mudie comes to the rescue with the back novels which she was too busy to get through in the season; there is the scamper from one country house to another, there are the flirtations to keep her hand in, the pets to be fed, the cousins to extemporize a mimic theatre, the curate—if worst comes to worst—to try a little ritualism upon. With these helps a country day, what with going to bed early and getting up late, may be frittered away as aimlessly as a day in town.

Woman may fairly object, we think, to abolish at one fell swoop such an ingenious fabric of idleness as this. A revolution in the whole system of social life, in the whole conception and drift of feminine existence, is a little too much to ask. As it is, woman wraps herself in her indolence, and is perfectly satisfied with her lot. She assumes, and the world has at least granted the assumption, that her little hands were never made to do anything which any rougher hands can do for them. Man has got accustomed to serve as her hewer of wood and drawer of water, and to expect nothing from her but poetry and refinement. It is a little too much to ask her to go back to the position of the squaw, and to do any work for herself. But it is worse to ask her to remodel the world around her, on the understanding that henceforth duty and toil and self-respect are to [325] take the place of frivolity and indolence and adoration.

The great passion which knits the two sexes together presents a yet stronger difficulty. To men, busy with the work of the world, there is no doubt that, however delightful, love takes the form of a mere interruption of their real life. They allow themselves the interval of its indulgence, as they allow themselves any other holiday, simply as something in itself temporary and accidental; as life, indeed, grows more complex, there is an increasing tendency to reduce the amount of time and attention which men devote to their affections. Already the great philosopher of the age has pronounced that the passion of love plays far too important a part in human existence, and that it is a terrible obstacle to human progress.

The general temper of the times echoes the sentence of Mr. Mill. The enthusiastic votary who has been pouring his vows at the feet of his mistress consoles himself, as he leaves her, with the thought that engagements cannot last for ever, and that he shall soon be able to get back to the real world of business and of life. He presses his beloved one, with all the eloquence of passion, to fix an early day for their union, but the eloquence has a very practical bearing. While Corydon is piping to Phyllis, he is anxious about the engagements he is missing, and the distance he is losing in the race for life. But Phyllis remains the nymph of passion and poetry and romance.

Time has no meaning for her; she is not neglecting any work; she is only idle, as she always is [326] idle. But love throws a new glory and a new interest around her indolence. The endless little notes with which she worries the Post-Office and her friends become suddenly sacred and mysterious. The silly little prattle hushes into confidential whispers. Every crush through the season, becomes the scene of a reunion of two hearts which have been parted for the eternity of twenty-four hours. Love, in fact, does not in the least change woman's life, or give it new earnestness or a fresh direction; but it makes it infinitely more interesting, and it heightens the enjoyment of wasting a day by a new sense of power. For that brief space of triumph Phyllis is able to make Corydon waste his day too. The more he writhes and wriggles under the compulsion, the more lingering looks he casts back on the work he has quitted, the greater her victory.

He cannot decently confess that he is tired of the little comedy in which he takes so romantic a part, and certainly his fellow actress will not help him to the confession. By dint of acting it, indeed, she comes at last to a certain belief in her *rôle*. She really imagines herself to be very busy, to have sacrificed her leisure as well as her heart to the object of her devotion. She scolds him for his backwardness in not more thoroughly sacrificing his leisure to her. Work may be very important to him, but it is of less importance to the self-sacrificing being who hasn't had one moment to finish the third volume of the last sensational novel since she plighted her troth to this [327] monster of ingratitude! Of course a man likes to be flattered, and does as much as he can in the way of believing in the little comedy too; in fact, it is all amazingly graceful and entertaining on the one side and on the other. Our only doubt is whether this graceful and entertaining mode of interrupting all the serious business of life will not be treated rather mercilessly by enfranchised woman. How will the enchantment of passion survive when the object of our adoration can only spare us an hour from her medical cases, or defers an interview because she is choked with fresh briefs? One of two results must clearly follow. Either the great Westminster philosopher is right, and love will play a far less important part than it has done in human affairs, or else it will concentrate itself, and take a far more intense and passionate character than it exhibits now.

We can quite conceive that the very difficulty of the new relations may give them a new fire and vigor, and that the women of the future, looking back on the old months of indolent coquetry, may feel a certain contempt for souls which can fritter away the grandeur of passion as they fritter away the grandeur of life. But even the gain of passion will hardly compensate us for the loss of variety. All this playing with love has a certain pretty independence about it, and leaves woman's individuality where it found it. Passion must of necessity whirl both beings, in the unity of a common desire, into one. And so we get back to the old problem of the monotony of life. But it is just this monotonous identity to which civilization, politics, and society are all visibly tending. [328] Railways will tunnel Alps for us, democracy will extinguish heroes, and raise mankind to a general level of commonplace respectability; woman's enfranchisement will level the social world, and leave between sex and sex the difference—even if it leaves that—of a bonnet.

COSTUME AND ITS MORALS. [329]

Nothing is more decisively indicative of the real value or necessity of a thing than the fact that, while its presence is hardly noticeable, it is immediately missed and asked for when it disappears; and it is thus that the paramount importance of clothing asserts itself by the conspicuousness of its absence. Of course the first purpose of dress is, or should be, decency, and for this, quantity rather than quality is looked for. But, as with the little cloud no larger than a man's hand, so from the primary fig-leaf or first element of dress, how great things have arisen! In respect of amplification, dress may be said to have attained its maximum when men wore ruffs which nearly concealed their heads, and shoes a quarter of a yard longer than their feet; but "fashion" has its day, and now dress threatens to dwindle into something not far from its original or fig-leaf dimensions.

Another perfectly legitimate object of dress is attractiveness, so that by its aid our persons may be set off to the best advantage; dress should also be individual and symbolic, so as to indicate clearly the position and character which we desire to obtain and hold. It is not of men's attire that we have now to speak; that has been settled for them by the tailors' strike, which practically [330] ordained that he that was shabby should be shabby, or even shabbier still, and he that had allowed himself to be thrust into the straitened trousers and scanty coatee of last year should continue to exhibit his proportions long after the grotesqueness of his figure had been recognised even by himself.

But it is of the dress of our women that we are compelled to testify, and it can hardly be denied that at the present moment it offends grievously in three particulars. It is inadequate for decency; it lacks that truthfulness which is, and should be, the base of all that is attractive and beautiful; and in its symbolism it is in the highest degree objectionable, for it not only aims at what is unreal and false, but it simulates that which is positively hateful and meretricious, so that it is difficult now for even a practised eye to distinguish the high-born maiden or matron of Belgravia from the Anonymas who haunt the drive and fill our streets.

This indictment is, it may be said, a severe one; but if we examine, so far as male critics may venture to do, the costume of a fashionable woman of the day, it can hardly be said to be unjust. The apparent object of modern female dress is to assimilate its wearers as nearly as possible in appearance to women of a certain class—the class to which it was formerly hardly practicable to allude, and yet be intelligible to young ladies; but all that is changed, and the habits and customs of the women of the *demi-monde* are now studied as if they were indeed curious, but [331] exceptionally admirable also, and thus a study unseemly and unprofitable has begotten a spirit of imitation which has achieved a degrading success.

"Our modest matrons meet," not "to stare the strumpet down," but to compare notes, to get hints, and to engage in a kind of friendly rivalry—in short, to pay that homage to Vice, and in a very direct way too, which Vice is said formerly to have paid to Virtue. Paint and powder are of course the first requisites for the end in view, and these adjuncts have to be laid on with such skill as the *débutante* or her toilette-maid possesses, which is sometimes so small as to leave their handiwork disgustingly coarse and apparent.

There are pearl-powder, violet-powder, rouge, bistre for the eyelids, belladonna for the eyes, whitelead and blacklead, yellow dye and mineral acids for the hair—all tending to the utter destruction of both hair and skin. The effect of this "diaphanous" complexion and "aurified" hair (we borrow the expressions) in a person intended by nature to be dark, or swarthy, is most comical; sometimes the whitelead is used so unsparingly that it has quite a blue tint, which glistens until the face looks more like a death's head anointed with phosphorus and oil for theatrical purposes than the head of a Christian gentlewoman. It may be interesting to know, and we have the information from high, because *soi-disant* fashionable authority, that the reign of golden locks and blue-white visages is drawing to a close, and that it is to be followed by bronze [332] complexions and blue-black hair—*à l'Africaine* we presume.

When fashionable Madame has, to her own satisfaction, painted and varnished her face, she then proceeds, like Jezebel, to tire her head, and, whether she has much hair or little, she fixes on to the back of it a huge nest of coarse hair generally well baked in order to free it from the parasites with which it abounded when it first adorned the person of some Russian or North-German peasant girl. Of course this gives an unnaturally large and heavy appearance to the cerebellar

region; but nature is not exactly what is aimed at, still less refinement.

If this style be not approved of, there is yet another fashion—namely, to cut the hair short in a crop, *créper* it, curl it, frizzle it, bleach it, burn it, and otherwise torture it until it has about as much life in it as last year's hay; and then to shampoo it, rumple it, and tousle it, until the effect is to produce the aspect of a madwoman in one of her worst fits. This method, less troublesome and costly than the other, may be considered even more striking, so that it is largely adopted by a number of persons who are rather disreputable, and poor. As is well known, not all of the asinine tribe wear asses' ears; nevertheless some of these votaries of dress find their ears too long, or too large, or ill-placed, or, what comes to the same thing, inconveniently placed, but a prettier or better-shaped pair are easily purchased, admirably moulded in gutta-percha or some other plastic material; they are delicately colored, fitted up with earrings and a spring apparatus, and [333] they are then adjusted on to the head, the despised natural ears being of course carefully hidden from view.

It is long enough since a bonnet meant shelter to the face or protection to the head; that fragment of a bonnet which at present represents the head-gear, and which was some years ago worn on the back of the head and nape of the neck, is now poised on the front, and ornamented with birds, portions of beasts, reptiles, and insects. We have seen a bonnet composed of a rose and a couple of feathers, another of two or three butterflies or as many beads and a bit of lace, and a third represented by five green leaves joined at the stalks. A white or spotted veil is thrown over the visage, in order that the adjuncts that properly belong to the theatre may not be immediately detected in the glare of daylight; and thus, with diaphanous tinted face, large painted eyes, and stereotyped smile, the lady goes forth looking much more as if she had stepped out of the green room of a theatre, or from a Haymarket saloon, than from an English home.

But it is in evening costume that our women have reached the minimum of dress and the maximum of brass. We remember a venerable old lady whose ideas of decorum were such that in her speech all above the foot was ankle, and all below the chin was chest; but now the female bosom is less the subject of a revelation than the feature of an exposition, and charms that were once reserved are now made the common property of every looker on. A costume which has been [334] described as consisting of a smock, a waistband, and a frill seems to exceed the bounds of honest liberality, and resembles most perhaps the attire mentioned by Rabelais, "nothing before and nothing behind, with sleeves of the same." Not very long ago two gentlemen were standing together at the Opera. "Did you ever see anything like that?" inquired one, with a significant glance, directing the eyes of his companion to the uncovered bust of a lady immediately below. "Not since I was weaned," was the suggestive reply. We are not aware whether the speaker was consciously or unconsciously reproducing a well-known archiepiscopal *mot*.

Though our neighbors are not strait-laced, so far as bathing-costume is concerned, they are less tolerant of the nude than we are in this highly-favored land. There was lately a story in one of the French papers that at a certain ball a lady was requested to leave the room because a chain of wrought gold, suspended from shoulder to shoulder, was the sole protection which it seemed to her well to wear on her bosom. To have made the toilette correspond throughout, the dress should have consisted of a crinoline skirt, which, though not so ornamental, would have been not less admirable and more effective.

Of course there are women to whom nature has been niggardly in the matter of roundness of form, but even these need not despair; if they cannot show their own busts, they can show something nearly as good, since we read the following, which we forbear to translate:—"Autre excentricité. C'est l'invention des *poitrines adhérentes* à l'usage des dames trop éthérées. Il s'agit [335] d'un système en caoutchouc rose, qui s'adapte à la place vide comme une ventouse à, la peau, et qui suit les mouvements de la respiration avec une précision mathématique et parfaite."

Of those limbs which it is still forbidden to expose absolutely, the form and contour can at least be put in relief by insisting on the skirts being gored and straightened to the utmost; indeed, some of the riding-habits we have seen worn are in this respect so contrived that, when viewed from behind, especially when the wearer is not of too fairy-like proportions, they resemble a pair of tight trousers rather than the full flowing robe which we remember as so graceful and becoming to a woman. It will be observed that the general aim of all these adventitious aids is to give an impression of earth and the fullness thereof, to appear to have a bigger cerebellum, a more sensuous development of limb, and a greater abundance of flesh than can be either natural or true; but we are almost at a loss how to express the next point of ambition with which the female mind has become inspired.

The women who are not as those who love their lords wish to be—indeed, as we have heard, those who have no lords of their own to love—have conceived the notion that, by simulating an "interesting condition" (we select the phrase accepted as the most delicate), they will add to their attractions; and for this purpose an article of toilet—an india-rubber anterior bustle—called the *demi-temps*, has been invented, and is worn beneath the dress, nominally to make the folds fall [336] properly, but in reality, as the name betrays, to give the appearance of a woman advanced in pregnancy.

No person will be found to say that the particular condition, when real, is unseemly or ridiculous. What it is when assumed, and for such a purpose—whether it is not all that and something worse —we leave our readers to decide for themselves. It is said that one distinguished personage first employed crinoline in order to render more graceful her appearance while in this situation; but these ladies with their ridiculous *demi-temps*, without excuse as without shame, travesty nature

in their own persons in a way which a low-comedy actress would be ashamed to do in a tenth-rate theatre. The name is French, let us hope the idea is also; and this reminds us of the title of a little piece lately played in Paris by amateurs for some charitable purpose—*Il n'y a plus d'enfants.* No; in France they may indeed say, "It is true *il n'y a plus d'enfants*, but then have we not invented the *demi-temps*?"

And if each separate point of female attire and decoration is a sham, so the whole is often a deception and a fraud. It is not true that by taking thought one cannot add a cubit to one's stature, for ladies, by taking thought about it, do add, if not a cubit, at least considerably, to their height, which, like almost everything about them, is often unreal. With high heels, *toupé*, and hat, we may calculate that about four or five inches are altogether borrowed for the occasion. Thus it comes to be a grave matter of doubt, when a man marries, how much is real of the woman who [337] has become his wife, or how much of her is her own only in the sense that she has bought, and possibly may have paid for it. To use the words of an old writer, "As with rich furred conies, their cases are far better than their bodies; and, like the bark of a cinnamon-tree, which is dearer than the whole bulk, their outward accoutrements are far more precious than their inward endowments."

Of the wife elect, her bones, her debts, and her caprices may be the only realities which she can bestow on her husband. All the rest—hair, teeth, complexion, ears, bosom, figure, including the *demi-temps*—are alike an imposition and a falsehood. In such case we should recommend, for the sake of both parties, that during at least the wedding-tour, the same precautions should be observed as when Louis XV. travelled with "the unblushing Chateauroux with her bandboxes and rougepots at his side, so that at every new station a wooden gallery had to be run up between their lodgings."

It may be said that in all this we are ungenerous and ungrateful, and that in discussing the costume of women we are touching on a question which pertains to women more than to men. But is that so? Are we not by thus exposing what is false, filthy, and meretricious, seeking to lead what was once dignified by the name of "the fair sex" from a course alike unbecoming and undignified to one more worthy of the sex and its attributes? Most men like to please women, and most women like to please men. For, as has been well said, "Pour plaire aux femmes il faut être [338] considéré des hommes, et pour être considéré des hommes il faut savoir plaire aux femmes."

We have a right to suppose that women do not adopt a fashion or a costume unless they suppose that it will add to their attractions in general, and possibly also please men in particular. This being so, it may be well to observe that these fashions do not please or attract men, for we know they are but the inventions of some vulgar, selfish *perruquier* or *modiste*. We may add that if we want to study the nude we can do so in the sculpture galleries, or among the Tableaux Vivants, at our ease; and that for well-bred or well-educated and well-born women, or even for only fashionable and fast women, to approximate in their manners, habits, and dress to the members of the *demi-monde* is a mistake, and a grievous one, if they wish to be really and adequately appreciated by men whose good opinion, if not more, they would desire to possess.

THE FADING FLOWER. [339]

If there is any part of man's conduct which proves more conclusively than another the baseness of his ingratitude, it is his indifference to the Fading Flower. Woman may well wonder at the charm which prostrates the heavy Guardsman at the feet of the belle of the season. Even the most ardent of worshippers at such a shrine must, one would think, desire in their deity a little more sweetness and light. But the beauty of eighteen summers is trained to look on worship as simply her due, and to regard amiability as a mere superfluity. She knows she can summon an adorer by one beckon of her fan, and dismiss him by another. A bow will repay the most finished of pretty speeches, and conversation can be conducted at the least possible expense by the slight trouble of recollecting who was at Lady A.'s ball, and the yet slighter trouble of guessing who is likely to be at Lady C.'s.

It is utterly needless to bestow any labor on society when society takes it as a crowning favor to be suffered simply to adore. There is a certain grandeur, therefore, of immobility about the English beauty, a statuesque perfection which no doubt has great merits of its own. But it must be owned that it is not amusing, and that it is only the intensity of our worship which saves us [340] from feeling it to be dull. Beauty is apt to be a little heavy on the stairs. A shade of distress flits over the loveliest of faces if we stray for a moment beyond the happy hunting-grounds of the ball-room or the Opera, the last Academy or the next Horticultural. Beautiful beings are made, they feel, not to amuse, but to be amused. The one object of their enthusiasm is the "funny Bishop" who turns a great debate into a jest for the entertainment of his fair friends in the Ladies' Gallery. The object of their social preference is the young wit who lounges up to tell his last little story, and then, without boring them for a reply, lounges away again. The debt which they owe to society is simply the morning ride which keeps them blooming through the season. The debt which society owes to them is that eternal succession of gay nothings which keeps London in a whirl till the grouse are ready for the sacrifice. In a word, woman in her earlier stages is simply receptive.

Light and sweetness come in with the Fading Flower. It is when the shy retreat of the elder sons

makes way for the shyer approach of their younger brothers that woman becomes fragrant and intelligent. The old indifference quickens into a subdued vivacity; Hermione descends from her pedestal and warms into flesh and blood. She turns chatty, and her chat insensibly deepens into conversation. She discovers a new interest in life and in the last novel of the season. She ventures on the confines of poetry, and if she does not read Mr. Tennyson's *Lucretius*, she keeps his photograph in her album. She flings herself with a far greater ardor into the mysteries of [341] croquet. She has been known to garden. As petal after petal floats down to earth she becomes artistic. She reads, she talks Mr. Ruskin. She has her own views on Venice and its Doges, her enthusiasm over Alps and artisans. The slow approach of autumn brings her to politics. She is deep in Mr. Disraeli's novels, and quotes Mr. Gladstone's Homer. She speculates on Charlie's chances for the county. She knows why the Home Secretary was absent from the last division. The drop of another petal warns her further afield. She is manly now; she comes in at breakfast with her hair about her ears, and a tale of the gallop she has had across country. She takes you over the farm, and laughs at your ignorance of pigs. She peeps into the odoriferous sanctum upstairs, and owns to a taste for cigarettes. She is slightly horsey, and knows to a pound the value of her mare. Another season, and she is interested in Church questions, and inquires what is the next "new thing" at St. Andrew's. She adores Lord Shaftesbury, or works frontals for St. Gogmagog. She collects for the Irish missions, or misses an *entrée* on Eves. It is only as woman fades that we realize the versatility, the inexhaustible resources, of woman.

The one scene, however, where the Fading Flower is perhaps seen at her best is the County Archæological Meeting. Of all rural delusions this is perhaps the pleasantest, and if the name is forbidding, the Fading Flower knows how little there is in a name. About half a dozen old gentlemen, of course, take the thing in grand earnest. It is beyond measure amusing to peep over [342] the learned Secretary's shoulder, to see the gray heads wagging and the spectacles in full play over the list of promised papers, to watch the carefully planned details, the solemn array of morning meetings, the grave excursions from abbey to castle, from castle to church, the graver soirées where Dryasdust revels amidst armor and knicknackery. It is even more amusing to see the Fading Flower step in at the close of this learned preparation, and with a woman's alchemy turn all this dust to gold. A little happy audacity converts the morning meetings into convenient gatherings for the groups of the day, the excursion resolves itself into a refined picnic, the learned soirée becomes a buzzing conversazione.

Those who look forward with interest to woman's entrance into our Universities may gather something of the results to be expected from such a step in the fields of rural archæology. Her very presence at the meeting throws an air of gentle absurdity over the whole affair. It is difficult for the driest of antiquaries to read a paper on Roman roads in the teeth of a charming being who sleeps to the close, and then awakes only to assure him it was "very romantic." But it must be confessed that the charming being has very little trouble with the antiquaries. Half the fun of the thing lies in the ease and grace of her taming of Dryasdust; the learned Professor dies at her touch into "a dear delightful old thing," and fetches and carries all day with a perfect obedience. It is a delightful change from town, a sort of glorified afternoon in a pastoral Zoological, this [343] junketing among the queer unclubbable animals of science and history. There is a noble disdain of rheumatism in the ardor with which they plunge into the dark and mysterious vaults where their willful student insists, with Mr. Froude, that those poor monks snatched their damp and difficult slumber; and there is a noble disdain of truth in their suppression of the treacherous and unsentimental "beer-cellar" which trembles on their lips.

Woman, in fact, carries her atmosphere of romantic credulity into the gray and arid scepticism of a groping archæology. She frowns down any suggestion of the improbability of a pretty story, she believes in the poison-sucking devotion of Queen Eleanor, she shrugs her shoulders impatiently at a whisper of Queen Mary's wig. Every kitchen becomes a torture-chamber, every drain a subterranean passage. But resolute as she is on this point of the poetry of the past, on all other questions she is the most docile of pupils. Her interest, her listening power, her curiosity, is inexhaustible. If she has a passion, indeed, it is for Early English. But she has a proper awe for Romanesque, and a singular interest in Third Pointed. She is ruthless in insisting on her victim's spelling out every word of a brass in Latin that she cannot understand, and which he cannot translate. She collects little fragments of Roman brick, and wraps them up in tissue-paper for preservation at home like bride-cake. She is severe on restoration, and merciless on whitewash. She plunges, in fact, gallantly into the spirit of the thing, but she gracefully denudes it of its [344] bareness and pedantry. Her bugle sings truce at midday for luncheon. She couches in the deep grass of the abbey ruins, and gathers in picturesque groups beneath castle walls. A flutter of silks, a ripple of feminine laughter, distract the audience from graver disquisitions. It is difficult to discuss the exact date of a moulding when soda-water bottles are popping beneath one's antiquarian nose.

After all, archæologists are men, and sandwiches are sandwiches. It is at that moment perhaps that the Fading Flower is at her best. Her waning attractions are heightened artistically by the background of old fogies. Her sentiment blends with the poetry of the ruins around. The young squire, the young parson, who have been yawning under the prose of Dryasdust, find refreshment in the gay prattle of archæological woman. The sun too is overpowering, and a pretty woman leaning on one's arm in the leafy recesses of a ruined castle is sometimes more overpowering than the sun. There is much in the romance of the occasion. There is a little perhaps in the champagne. At any rate the Fading Flower blooms often into matronly life under the kindly influences of archæological meetings, and antiquarian studies flourish gaily under the patronage of woman.

There is a certain melancholy in tracing further the career of the Fading Flower. We long to arrest it at each of these picturesque stages, as we long to arrest the sunset in its lovelier moments of violet and gold. But the sunset dies into the gray of eve, and woman sets with the [345] same fatal persistency. The evanescent tints fade into the gray. Woman becomes hard, angular, colorless. Her floating sentiment, so graceful in its mobility, curdles into opinions. Her conversation, so charmingly impalpable, solidifies into discussion. Her character, like her face, becomes rigid and osseous. She entrenches herself in the 'ologies. She works pinafores for New-Zealanders in the May Meetings, and appears in wondrous bonnets at the Church Congress. She adores Mr. Kingsley because he is earnest, and groans over the triviality of the literature of the day. She takes up the grievances of her sex, and badgers the puzzled overseer who has omitted to place her name on the register. She pronounces old men fogies, and young men intolerable. She throws out dark hints of her intention to compose a great work which shall settle everything. Then she bursts into poetry, and pens poems of so fiery a passion that her family are in consternation lest she should elope with the half-pay officer who meets her by moonlight on the pier. Then she plunges into science, and cuts her hair short to be in proper trim for Professor Huxley's lectures.

For awhile she startles her next neighbor at dinner with speculations on molluscs, and questions as to the precise names of the twelve hundred new species of fish that Professor Agassiz has caught in the river Orinoco. There is a more terrible stage when she becomes heretical, subscribes to the support of Mr. Tonneson and pities the poor Bishop of Natal. But from this she is commonly saved by the deepening of eve. Little by little all this restless striving against the [346] monotony of her existence dies down into calm. The gray of life hushes the Fading Flower into the kindly aunt, the patient nurse, the gentle friend of the poor. It is hard to recognise the proud beauty, the vivacious flirt, the sentimental poetess of days gone by in the practical little woman who watches by Harry's sick-bed or hurries off with blankets and broth down the lane. In some such peace the Fading Flower commonly finds her rest—a peace unromantic, utilitarian, and yet not perhaps unbeautiful. She has found—as she tells us—her work at last; and yet in the life that seems so profitless she has been doing a work after all. She has at any rate vindicated her sex against the charge of what Mr. Arnold calls Hebraism. She has displayed in Hellenic roundness the completeness of the nature of woman.

Compared with the quick transitions, with the endless variety of her life, the life of man seems narrow and poor. There is hardly a phase of human thought, of human action, which she has not touched, and she has never touched but to adorn. If she has faded, she has revealed a new power and beauty and fragrance at each stage in her decay. Nothing in her life has proved so becoming as her leaving it. The song of ingenuity, of triumph, of defence, which has run along the course of her decline, softens at its close into a swan-song of peace and gentleness and true womanhood.

LA FEMME PASSÉE. [347]

Without doubt it is a time of trial to all women, more or less painful according to individual disposition, when they first begin to grow old and lose their good looks. Youth and beauty make up so much of their personal value, so much of their natural *raison d'être*, that when these are gone many feel as if their whole career was at an end, and as if nothing was left to them now that they are no longer young enough to be loved as girls are loved, or pretty enough to be admired as once they were admired. For women of a certain position have so little wholesome occupation, and so little ambition for anything, save, indeed, that miserable thing called "getting on in society," that they cannot change their way of life with advancing years; they do not attempt to find interest in things outside themselves, and independent of the mere personal attractiveness which in youth constituted their whole pleasure of existence. This is essentially the case with fashionable women, who have staked their all on appearance, and to whom good looks are of more account than noble deeds; and, accordingly, the struggle to remain young is a frantic one with them, and as degrading as it is frantic.

With the ideal woman of middle age—that pleasant woman, with her happy face and softened [348] manner, who unites the charms of both epochs, retaining the ready responsiveness of youth while adding the wider sympathies of experience—with her there has never been any such struggle to make herself an anachronism. Consequently she remains beautiful to the last, far more beautiful than all the paste and washes in Madame Rachel's shop could make her. Sometimes, if rarely in these latter days, we meet her in society, where she carries with her an atmosphere of her own—an atmosphere of honest, wholesome truth and love, which makes every one who enters it better and purer for the time. All children and all young persons love her, because she understands and loves them. For she is essentially a mother—that is, a woman who can forget herself, who can give without asking to receive, and who, without losing any of the individualism which belongs to self-respect, can yet live for and in the lives of others, and find her best joy in the well-being of those about her. There is no servility, no exaggerated sacrifice in this; it is simply the fulfillment of woman's highest duty—the expression of that grand maternal instinct which need not necessarily include the fact of personal maternity, but which must find utterance in some line of unselfish action with all women worthy of the name.

The ideal woman of middle age understands the young because she has lived with them. If a mother, she has performed her maternal duties with cheerfulness and love. There has been no [349]

giving up her nursery to the care of a hired servant who is expected to do for twenty pounds a year what the tremendous instinct of a mother's love could not find strength to do. When she had children, she attended to them in great part herself, and learnt all about their tempers, their maladies, and the best methods of management; as they grew up she was still the best friend they had, the Providence of their young lives who gave them both care and justice, both love and guidance. Such a manner of life has forced her to forget herself. When her child lay ill, perhaps dying, she had no heart and no time to think of her own appearance, and whether this dressing-gown was more becoming than that; and what did the doctor think of her with her hair pushed back from her face; and what a fright she must have looked in the morning light after her sleepless night of watching. The world and all its petty pleasures and paltry pains faded away in the presence of the stern tragedy of the hour; and not the finest ball of the season seemed to be worth a thought compared to the all-absorbing question whether her child slept after his draught and whether he ate his food with better appetite.

And such a life, in spite of all its cares, has kept her young as well as unselfish; we should rather say, young because unselfish. As she comes into the room with her daughters, her kindly face unpolluted by paint, her dress picturesque or fashionable according to her taste, but decent in form and consistent in tone with her age, it is often remarked that she looks more like their sister [350]
than their mother. This is because she is in harmony with her age, and has not, therefore, put herself in rivalry with them; and harmony is the very keystone of beauty. Her hair may be streaked with white, the girlish firmness and transparency of her skin has gone, the pearly clearness of her eye is clouded, and the slender grace of line is lost, but for all that she is beautiful, and she is intrinsically young. What she has lost in outside material charm—in that mere *beauté da diable* of youth—she has gained in character and expression; and, not attempting to simulate the attractiveness of a girl, she keeps what nature gave her—the attractiveness of middle age. And as every epoch has its own beauty, if woman would but learn that truth, she is as beautiful now as a matron of fifty, because in harmony with her years, and because her beauty has been carried on from matter to spirit, as she was when a maiden of sixteen. This is the ideal woman of middle age, met with even yet at times in society—the woman whom all men respect, whom all women envy, and wonder how she does it, and whom all the young adore, and wish they had for an elder sister or an aunt. And the secret of it all lies in truth, in love, in purity, and in unselfishness.

Standing far in front of this sweet and wholesome idealization is *la femme passée* of to-day—the reality as we meet with it at balls and fêtes and afternoon at homes, ever foremost in the mad chase after pleasure, for which alone she seems to think she has been sent into the world. [351]
Dressed in the extreme of youthful fashion, her thinning hair dyed and crimped and fired till it is more like red-brown tow than hair, her flaccid cheeks ruddled, her throat whitened, her bust displayed with unflinching generosity, as if beauty was to be measured by cubic inches, her lustreless eyes blackened round the lids, to give the semblance of limpidity to the tarnished whites—perhaps the pupil dilated by belladonna, or perhaps a false and fatal brilliancy for the moment given by opium, or by eau de cologne, of which she has a store in her carriage, and drinks as she passes from ball to ball; no kindly drapery of lace or gauze to conceal the breadth of her robust maturity, or to soften the dreadful shadows of her leanness—there she stands, the wretched creature who will not consent to grow old, and who will still affect to be like a fresh coquettish girl when she is nothing but *la femme passée, la femme passée et ridicule* into the bargain.

There is not a folly for which even the thoughtlessness of youth is but a poor excuse into which she, in all the plenitude of her abundant experience, does not plunge. Wife and mother as she may be, she flirts and makes love as if an honorable issue was as open to her as to her daughter, or as if she did not know to what end flirting and making love lead in all ages. If we watch the career of such a woman, we see how, by slow but very sure degrees, she is obliged to lower the standard of her adorers, and to take up at last with men of inferior social position, who are content to buy her patronage by their devotion. To the best men of her own class she can give [352]
nothing that they value; so she barters with snobs, who go into the transaction with their eyes open, and take the whole affair as a matter of exchange, and *quid pro quo* rigidly exacted. Or she does really dazzle some very young and low born man who is weak as well as ambitious, and who thinks the fugitive regard of a middle-aged woman of high rank something to be proud of and boasted about. That she is as old as his own mother—at this moment selling tapes behind a village counter, or gathering up the eggs in a country farm—tells nothing against the association with him; and the woman who began her career of flirtation with the son of a duke ends it with the son of a shopkeeper, having between these two terms spanned all the several degrees of degradation which lie between giving and buying.

She cannot help herself; for it is part of the insignia of her artificial youth to have the reputation of a love affair, or the pretence of one, if even the reality is a mere delusion. When such a woman as this is one of the matrons, and consequently one of the leaders of society, what can we expect from the girls? What worse example could be given to the young? When we see her with her own daughters we feel instinctively that she is the most disastrous adviser they could have; and when in the company of girls or young married women not belonging to her, we doubt whether we ought not to warn their natural guardians against allowing such associations, for all that her standing in society is undeniable, and not a door is shut against her. We may have no absolutely [353]
tangible reason to give for our distaste beyond the self-evident facts that she paints her face and dyes her hair, dresses in a very *decolleté* style, and affects a girlish manner that is out of harmony with her age and condition. But though we cannot formularize reasons, we have

instincts; and sometimes instinct sees more clearly than reason.

What good in life does this kind of woman do? All her time is taken up, first, in trying to make herself look twenty or thirty years younger than she is, and then in trying to make others believe the same; and she has neither thought nor energy to spare from this, to her, far more important work than is feeding the hungry or nursing the sick, rescuing the fallen or soothing the sorrowful. The final cause of her existence seems to be the impetus she has given to a certain branch of trade manufacture—unless we add to this, the corruption of society. For whom, but for her, are the "little secrets" which are continually being advertised as woman's social salvation—regardless of grammar! The "eaux noire, brun, et châtain, which dyes the hair any shade in one minute;" the "kohhl for the eyelids;" the "blanc de perle," and "rouge de Lubin"—which does not wash off; the "bleu pour les veines;" the "rouge of eight shades," and "the sympathetic blush," which are cynically offered for the use and adoption of our mothers and daughters, find their chief patroness in the *femme passée* who makes herself up—the middle-aged matron engaged in her frantic struggle against time, and obstinately refusing to grow old in spite of all that nature may say or do. [354]

Bad as the girl of the period often is, this horrible travesty of her vices in the modern matron is even worse. Indeed, were it not for her, the girls would never have gone to such lengths as those to which they have gone; for elder women have naturally immense influence over younger ones, and if mothers were to set their faces resolutely against the follies of the day, daughters would and must give in. As it is, they go even ahead of the young, and by example on the one hand and rivalry on the other, sow the curse of corruption broadcast where they were meant to have only a pure influence and to set a wise example. Were it not for those who still remain faithful, women who regard themselves as appointed by God the trustees for humanity and virtue, the world would go to ruin forthwith; but so long as the five righteous are left we have hope, and a certain amount of security for the future, when the present disgraceful madness of society shall have subsided.

PRETTY PREACHERS. [355]

To beings of the rougher sex—let us honestly confess it—one of the most charming of those ever-recurrent surprises which the commonest incidents of the holidays never fail to afford is the surprise of finding themselves at church. Whatever the cause may be, whether we owe our new access of devotion to the early breakfast and the boredom of a bachelor morning, or to the moral compulsion of the cunning display of prayer-books and hymnals in the hall, or to the temptation of that chattiest and gayest of all walks—the walk to church—or to an uneasy conscience that spurs us to set a good example to the coachman, or to a sheer impulse of courtesy to the rector, certain it is that a week after we have been lounging at the club-window, and wondering how all the good people get through their Sunday morning, we find ourselves safely boxed in the family pew, and chorusing the family "Amen!"

No doubt much of our new temper springs simply from the change of scene, and if the first week in the country were a time for self-analysis we might amuse ourselves with observing what a sudden simplicity of taste may be gained simply by a rush from town. There is a pleasant irony in being denounced from pulpit and platform as jaded voluptuaries, and then finding ourselves able to trample through coppices and plunge into cowsheds as if we had never seen a cowshed or a coppice before. But there is more than the pleasure of surprise in the peculiar rural development of attendance at church. Piety brings its own reward. We find ourselves invested with a new domestic interest, and brought into far closer and warmer domestic relations. Mamma looks a great deal more benignant than usual, and the girls lean on one's arm with a more trustful confidence and a deeper sympathy. [356]

A new bond of family union has been found in that victory of the pew over the club-window. But earthly pleasure is always dashed with a little disappointment, and one drop of bitterness lingers in the cup of joy. If only Charlie and papa would remain awake during the sermon! They are so good in the Psalms, so attentive through the Lessons, so sternly responsive to each Commandment, that it is sad to see them edging towards the comfortable corners with the text, and fast asleep under the application. Then, too, there is so little hope of reform, not merely because on this point men are utterly obdurate, but because it is impossible for their reformers even to understand their obduracy. For with both the whole question is a pure question of sympathy. Men sleep under sermons because the whole temper of their minds, as they grow into a larger culture, drifts further and further from the very notion of preaching. Inquiry, quiet play of thought, a somewhat indolent appreciation of the various sides of every subject, an appetite for novelty, a certain shrinking from the definite, a certain pleasure in the vague—these characteristics of modern minds are hardly characteristics of the pulpit. There are, of course, your drawing-room spouters, who can reel off an artistic or poetic or critical discourse of any length on the rug. But, as a rule, men neither like to pump upon their kind nor to be pumped upon. They like a quiet, genial talk which turns over everything and settles nothing. They like to put their case, to put their objection, but they like both to be brief and tentative. As a rule they talk with their guard up, and say nothing about their deeper thoughts or feelings. They vote a man who airs his emotions to be as great a bore as the man with a dogma, or the man with a hobby. A sermon, therefore, from the very necessities of its structure, is the very type of the sort [357]

of talk that revolts men most.

On the other hand, women really enjoy preaching. Mamma's reply to the natural inquiry as to the goodness of the sermon—"My dear, all sermons are good"—is something more than a matronly snub, it is the inner conviction of woman. She likes, not merely a talk, but a good long talk. She likes being abused. She likes being dogmatized over and intellectually trampled on. In fact, she has very little belief in the intellect. But then she has an immense faith in the heart. She lives in a world of affections and sympathies. She has her little tale of passion in the past that she tells over [358] to herself in the dusk of the autumn evening. She believes that the world at large is moved by those impulses of love and dislike that play so great a part in her own. And then, too, she has her practical house-keeping side, and likes her religion done up in neat little parcels of "heads" and "considerations" and "applications," and handed over the counter for immediate use. And so while papa quarrels with the rector's forty minutes, his indiscriminate censure of a world utterly unknown to him, his declamation against Pusey or Colenso, or while Charlie laughs over his rhetoric and his sentiment, woman listens a little sadly and wearily, and longs for a golden age when husbands will love sermons and men understand clergymen.

It is just from this theological deadlock that we are freed by the Pretty Preacher. If the world laughs at the Reverend Olympia Brown, it is not because she preaches, but because she prisons herself in a pulpit. The sure evidence that woman is to become the preacher of the future is that woman is the only preacher men listen to. It is hard to imagine any bribe short of the National Debt that would have induced us to listen through the dog-days of the last few weeks to the panting rhetoric of Mr. Spurgeon. But it is harder to imagine the bribe that would have roused us to flight as we lay beneath the plane-tree, and listened to the cool ripple of the Pretty Preacher. Of course it is a mere phase in the life of woman, a short interval between the dawn and the night. There is an exquisite piquancy in the raw, shy epigrams of the abrupt little dogmatist who [359] is just out of her teens. Her very want of training and science gives a novelty to her hits that makes her formidable in the ring. No doubt, too, as we have owned before, there is a faint and delicate attraction about the Fading Flower of later years that at certain times and places makes it not impossible to sit under her.

But the sphere of the Pretty Preacher lies really between these extremes. She is not at war with mankind, like the nymph of bread and butter; nor does mankind suspect her of subtle designs in her discourse as it suspects the elder homilist. Her talk is just as easy and graceful and natural as herself, and, moreover, it is always in season. She never suffers a serious reflection to interfere with the whirl of town. She quite sees the absurdity of a sermon at a five o'clock tea. No one is freer from the boredom of a long talk when there is a chance of a boat or a ride. But there are moments when one is too hot, or too tired, or too lazy for chat or exertion, and such moments are the moments of the Pretty Preacher. The first week of the holidays is especially her own. There is a physical pleasure in doing, thinking, saying nothing. The highest reach of human effort consists in disentangling a skein of silk for her, or turning over Doré's hideous sketches for the Idyls. At such a moment there is a freshness as of cool waters in the accents of the Pretty Preacher. She does not plunge into the deepest themes at once. She leads her listener gently on, up the slopes of art or letters or politics, to the higher peaks where her purely dogmatic mission begins. She is [360] artistic, and she labors to wake the idler at her feet to higher views of beauty and art. She points out the tinting of the distant hills, she quotes Ruskin, she criticizes Millais. She crushes her auditor with a sense of his ignorance, of the base unpoetic view of things with which he lounged through the last Academy. What she longs for in English art is nobleness of purpose, and we smile bitter scorn in the sunshine at the ignoble artist who suffers a thought of his butcher's bills to penetrate into the studio. If we could only stretch the Royal Academicians beside us on the grass, what a thrill and an emotion would run through those elderly gentlemen as they listened to the indignation of the Pretty Preacher.

But art shades off into literature, and literature into poetry. We are driven into a confession that we enjoy the frivolous articles that those horrid papers have devoted to her sex. Is there nothing, the Pretty Preacher asks us solemnly, to be said against our own? And the sun is hot, and we are speechless. It was shameful of us to put down the *Spanish Gipsy*, and let it return unfinished to Mudie's! Never did rebuke so fill us with shame at our want of imagination and of poesy. But already the Preacher has passed to politics, and is deep in Mr. Mill's prophecies of coming events. She is severe on the triviality of the House, or the quarrelsome debates of the past Session. She passes by our murmured excuse of the weather, and dwells with a temperate [361] enthusiasm on the fact that the next will be a social Parliament. Do we know anything about the Poor-laws or Education or Trades'-societies? Have we subscribed to Mr. Mill's election? We plead poverty, but the miserable plea dies away on the contemptuous air.

What our Pretty Preacher would like above all things would be to meet that dear Mr. Shaw Lefevre, and thank him for his efforts to protect woman. But she knows we are utterly heretical on the subject; she doubts very much whether we take in the *Victoria Magazine*. We listen as the Tory Mayor of Birmingham listened to Mr. Bright at his banquet. The politics are not ours, and the literature is not ours, and the art is not ours; but it is pleasant to lie in the sunshine and hear it all so charmingly put by the Pretty Preacher. We own that sermons have a little to say for themselves; above all, that the impossibility of replying to them has its advantages in a case like this. It would be absurd to discuss these matters with the Pretty Preacher, but it is delightful to look up and see the kindling little face and listen to the sermon.

It is, however, as the theologian proper, as the moralist and divine, that we love her most. She arrives at this peak at last. As a rule, she chooses the tritest topics, but she gives them a novelty

and grace of her own. Even Thackeray's old "Vanity of Vanities" wakes into new life as she dexterously couples it with the dances of the last season. We nod our applause from the grass as she denounces the worthlessness and frivolity of the life we lead. If the weather were cool [362] enough we should at once vow, as she exhorts us, to be earnest and great and good. Above all, let us be noble. The Pretty Preacher is great on self-sacrifice. She sent two of her spoilt dresses to those poor people in the East-end, after listening to a whole sermon on their sufferings. The congregation at her feet feels a twinge of remorse at the thought of his inhumanity, and swears he will put down his segars and devote the proceeds to the emigration fund. Does he ever read Keble? There is a slight struggle in the unconverted mind, and a faint whisper that he now and then reads Tupper; but it is too hot to be flippant, or to do more than swear eternal allegiance to the *Christian Year*.

The evening deepens, and the sermon deepens with it. It is one of the most disgusting points about the divine in the pulpit that he is always boasting of himself as a man like as we are, and of the sins he denounces as sins of his own. It is the special charm of the fair divine above us that she is eminently a being not as we are, but one serene, angelic, pure. It is the very vagueness of her condemnation that tells on us—the utter ignorance of what is so familiar to us that the vagueness betrays, the utter unskillfulness of the hits, and the purity that makes them so unskillful. It is only when she descends to particulars that we can turn round on the Pretty Preacher—only when a burning and impassioned invective against Cider Cellars suddenly softens into the plaintive inquiry, "But, oh, Charlie, dear, what *are* the Cider Cellars?" So long as the [363] preacher keeps in the sphere of the indefinite, we lie at her mercy, and hear the soft thunders roll resistlessly overhead.

But then they are soft thunders. We feel almost encouraged, like Luther, to "sin boldly" when the absolving fingers brush lightly over our cousinly hair. Our censor, too, has faith in us, in our capacity and will for better things, and it is amazingly pleasant to have the assurance confirmed by a squeeze from the gentle theologian's hand. And so night comes down, and preacher and penitent stroll pleasantly home together, and mamma wonders where both can have been; and the Pretty Preacher lays her head on her pillow with the sweet satisfaction that her mission is accomplished, and that a reprobate soul—the soul, too, of such a gentlemanly and agreeable reprobate—is won.

SPOILT WOMEN. [364]

Like children and all soft things, women are soon spoilt if subjected to unwholesome conditions. Sometimes the spoiling comes from over-harshness, sometimes from over-indulgence; what we are speaking of to-day is the latter condition—the spoiling which comes from being petted and given way to and indulged, till they think themselves better than everybody else, and as if living under laws made specially for them alone. Men get spoilt too in the same manner; but for the most part there is a tougher fibre in them, which resists the flabby influences of flattery and exaggerated attention better than can the morale of the weaker sex; and, besides, even arbitrary men meet with opposition in certain directions, and the most self-contented social autocrat knows that his humblest adherents criticise though they dare not oppose.

A man who has been spoilt by success and a gratified ambition, so that he thinks himself a small Alexander in his own way, and able to conquer any obstacles which may present themselves, has a certain high-handed activity of will about him that does not interfere with his duties in life; he is not made fretful and impatient and exigeant as a woman is—as if he alone of all mankind is to be [365] exempt from misfortune and annoyances; as if his friends must never die, his youth never fade, his circumstances run always smoothly, protected by the care of others from all untoward hitch; and as if time and tide, which wait for no one else, are to be bound to him as humble servants dutifully observant of his wishes.

The useful art of "finding his level," which he learnt at school and in his youth generally, keeps him from any very weak manifestation of being spoilt; save, indeed, when he has been spoilt by women at home, nursed up by an adoring wife, and a large circle of wife's sisters almost as adoring, to all of whom his smallest wishes are religious obligations, and his faintest virtues godly graces, and who vie with each other which of them shall wait upon him most servilely, flatter him most outrageously, pet and coax and coddle him most entirely, and so do him the largest amount of spiritual damage, and unfit him most thoroughly for the worth and work of masculine life. A man subjected to this insidious injury is simply ruined so far as any real manliness of nature goes. He is made into that sickening creature, "a sweet being," as the women call him—a woman's man, with flowing hair and a turn for poetry, full of highflown sentiment, and morbidly excited sympathies; a man almost as much woman as man, who has no backbone of ambition in him, but who puts his whole life into love, just as women do, and who becomes at last emphatically not worth his salt.

Bad as it is for a man to be *kowtowed* by men, it is not so bad, because not so weakening, as the [366] domestic idolatry which sometimes goes on when one man is the centre of a large family of women, and the only object upon which the natural feminine instinct can expend itself. No greater damage can be done to a man than is done by this kind of domestic idolatry. But, in truth, the evil is too pleasant to be resisted; and there is scarcely a man so far master of himself as to

withstand the subtle intoxication, the sweet and penetrating poison, of woman's tender flattery and loving submission. To at certain extent it is so entirely the right thing, because it is natural and instinctive, that it is difficult to draw the line and map out exactly the division between right and wrong, pleasantness and harmfulness, and where loving submission ends and debasing slavishness begins.

Spoilt women are spoilt mainly from a like cause—over-attention from men. A few certainly are to be found, as pampered daughters, with indulgent mammas and subservient aunts given up wholly to ruining their young charge with the utmost despatch possible; but this is comparatively a rare form of the disease, and one which a little wholesome matrimonial discipline would soon cure. For it is seldom that a petted daughter becomes a spoilt wife, human affairs having that marvellous power of compensation, that inevitable tendency to readjust the balance, which prevents the continuance of a like excess under different forms.

Besides, a spoilt daughter generally makes such a supremely unpleasant wife that the husband [367] has no inducement to continue the mistake, and therefore either lowers her tone by a judicious exhibition of snubbing, or, if she is aggressive as well as unpleasant, leaves her to fight with her shadows in the best way she can, glad for his own part to escape the strife she will not forego. One characteristic of the spoilt woman is her impatience of anything like rivalry. She never has a female friend—certainly not one of her own degree, and not one at all in the true sense of the word. Friendship presupposes equality, and a spoilt woman knows no equality. She has been so long accustomed to consider herself as the lady-paramount that she cannot understand it if any one steps in to share her honors and divide her throne.

To praise the beauty of any other woman, to find her charming, or to pay her the attention due to a charming woman, is to insult our spoilt darling, and to slight her past forgiveness. If there is only one good thing, it must be given to her—the first seat, the softest cushion, the most protected situation; and she looks for the best of all things as if naturally consecrated from her birth into the sunshine of life, and as if the "cold shade" which may do for others were by no means the portion allotted to her. It is almost impossible to make the spoilt woman understand the grace or the glory of sacrifice. By rare good fortune she may sometimes be found to possess an indestructible germ of conscience which sorrow and necessity can develop into active good; [368] but only sometimes. The spoilt woman *par excellence* understands only her own value, only her own merits and the absolutism of her own requirements; and sacrifice, self-abnegation, and the whole class of virtues belonging to unselfishness are as much unknown to her as is the Decalogue in the original, or the squaring of the circle.

The spoilt woman as the wife of an unsuccessful husband or the mother of sickly children is a pitiable spectacle. If it comes to her to be obliged to sacrifice her usual luxuries, to make an old gown serve when a new one is desired, to sit up all night watching by the sick bed, to witness the painful details of illness, perhaps of death, to meet hardship face to face, and to bend her back to the burden of sorrow, she is at the first absolutely lost. Not the thing to be done, but her own discomfort in doing it, is the one master idea—not others' needs, but her own pain in supplying them, the great grief of the moment. Many are the hard lessons set us by life and fate, but the hardest of all is that given to the spoilt woman when she is made to think for others rather than for herself, and is forced by the exigencies of circumstances to sacrifice her own ease for the greater necessities of her kind.

All that large part of the perfect woman's nature which expresses itself in serving is an unknown function to the spoilt woman. She must be waited on, but she cannot in her turn serve even the one or two she loves. She is the woman who calls her husband from one end of the room to the [369] other to put down her cup, rather than reach out her arm and put it down for herself; who, however weary he may be, will bid him get up and ring the bell, though it is close to her own hand, and her longest walk during the day has been from the dining-room to the drawing-room. It is not that she cannot do these small offices for herself, but that she likes the feeling of being waited on and attended to; and it is not for love—and the amiable if weak pleasure of attracting the notice of the beloved—it is just for the vanity of being a little somebody for the moment, and of playing off the small regality involved in the procedure. She would not return the attention.

Unlike the Eastern women, who wait on their lords, hand and foot, and who place their highest honor in their lowliest service, the spoilt woman of Western life knows nothing of the natural grace of womanly serving for love, for grace, or for gratitude. This kind of thing is peculiarly strong among the *demi-monde* of the higher class, and among women who are not of the *demi-monde* by station, but by nature. The respect they cannot command by their virtues they demand in the simulation of manner; and perhaps no women are more tenacious of the outward forms of deference than those who have lost their claim to the vital reality.

It is very striking to see the difference between the women of this type, the *petites maîtresses* who require the utmost attention and almost servility from man, and the noble dignity of service which the pure woman can afford to give—which she finds, indeed, that it belongs to the very [370] purity and nobleness of her womanhood to give. It is the old story of the ill-assured position which is afraid of its own weakness, and the security which can afford to descend—the rule holding good for other things besides mere social place.

Another characteristic of the spoilt woman is the changeableness and excitability of her temper. All suavity and gentleness and delightful gaiety and perfect manners when everything goes right, she startles you by her outburst of petulance when the first cross comes. If no man is a hero to his valet, neither is a spoilt woman a heroine to her maid; and the lady who has just been the

charm of the drawing-room, upstairs in her boudoir makes her maid go through spiritual exercises to which walking on burning ploughshares is the only fit analogy. A length of lace unstarched, a ribbon unsewed, a flower set awry, anything that crumples only one of the myriad rose-leaves on which she lies, and the spoilt woman raves as much as if each particular leaf had become suddenly beset with thorns.

If a dove was to be transformed to a hawk the change would not be more complete, more startling, than that which occurs when the spoilt woman of well-bred company manners puts off her mask to her maid, and shows her temper over trifles. Whoever else may suffer the grievances of life, she cannot understand that she also must be at times one of the sufferers with the rest; and if by chance the bad moment comes, the person accompanying it has a hard time of it. There [371] are spoilt women also who have their peculiar exercises in thought and opinion, and who cannot suffer that any one should think differently from themselves, or find those things sacred which to them are accursed. They will hear nothing but what is in harmony with themselves, and they take it as a personal insult when men or women attempt to reason with them, or even hold their own without flinching.

This kind is to be found specially among the more intellectual of a family or a circle; women who are pronounced "clever" by their friends, and who have been so long accustomed to think themselves clever that they have become spoilt mentally as others are personally, and fancy that minds and thoughts must follow in their direction, just as eyes and hands must follow and attend their sisters. The spoilt woman of the mental kind is a horrid nuisance generally. She is greatly given to large discourse; but discourse of a kind that leans all to one side, and that denies the right of any one to criticise, doubt, or contradict, is an intellectual Tower of Pisa under the shadow of which it is not pleasant to live.

TRANSCRIBER'S NOTES

Pages x and 24 are blank in the original.

The following words appear with and without hyphens. They have been left as in the original.

ball-room	ballroom
business-like	businesslike
hearth-rug	hearthrug
house-keeper	housekeeper
house-keeping	housekeeping
man-like	manlike
now-a-days	nowadays
over-head	overhead

Variations in spelling have been left as in the original. Examples include the following:

center	centre
learned	learnt
spoiled	spoilt

The following corrections have been made to the text:

Page xi: INTRODUCTION, 13[original has 5]

Page 48: slink away from a bantam[original has bantum] hen

Page 67: you[original has vou] go in for this sort

Page 129: sheer force of genius[original has genuis]

Page 161: some out-of-the-way[original has out-of-the way] corner

Page 220: exhausts itself in a declaration[original has delaration] of revolt

Page 269: ignorant of contemporary[original is split across lines after con but hyphen is missing] fashions

Page 303: following the [original has the the] same extravagance

Page 332: torture it until it[original has is] has about as much life

Ellipses match the original.

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