ESSAYS UPON SOCIAL SUBJECTS BOOK FIRST

BY

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GUSHING MEN

The picture of a gushing creature all heart and no brains, all impulse and no ballast, is familiar to most of us; and we know her, either by repute or by personal acquaintance, as well as we know our alphabet. But we are not so familiar with the idea of the gushing man. Yet gushing men exist, if not in such numbers as their sisters, still in quite sufficient force to constitute a distinct type. The gushing man is the furthest possible removed from the ordinary manly ideal, as women create it out of their own imaginations. Women like to picture men as inexorably just, yet tender; calm, grave, restrained, yet full of passion well mastered; Greathearts with an eye cast Mercywards if you will, else unapproachable by all the world; Goethes with one weak corner left for Bettina, where love may queen it over wisdom, but 2 in all save love strong as Titans, powerful as gods, unchangeable as fate. They forgive anything in a man who is manly according to their own pattern and ideas. Even harshness amounting to brutality is condoned if the hero have a jaw of sufficient squareness, and mighty passions just within the limits of control—as witness Jane Eyre's Rochester and his long line of unpleasant followers. But this harshness must be accompanied by love. Like the Russian wife who wept for want of her customary thrashing, taking immunity from the stick to mean indifference, these women would rather have brutality with love than no love at all.

But a gushing man, as judged by men among men, is a being so foreign to the womanly ideal that very few understand him when they do see him. And they do not call him gushing. He is frank, enthusiastic, unworldly, aspiring; perhaps he is labelled with that word of power, 'high-souled;' but he is not gushing, save when spoken of by men who despise him. For men have an intense contempt for him. A woman who has no ballast, and whose self-restraint goes to the winds on every occasion, is accepted for what she is worth, and but little disappointment and less annoyance is felt for what is wanting. Indeed, men in general expect so little from women that their follies count as of course and only what might be looked for. They are like marriage, or the English climate, or a lottery ticket, or a dark horse heavily backed, and have to be taken for better or worse as they may turn out, with the 3 violent probability that the chances are all on the side of the worse.

But the gushing man is inexcusable. He is a nuisance or a laughing-stock; and as either he is resented. In his club, at the mess-table, in the city, at home, wherever he may be and whatever he may be about, he is always plunging headlong into difficulties and

dragging his friends with him; always quarrelling for a straw; putting himself grossly in the wrong and vehemently apologizing afterwards; hitting wild at one moment and down on his knees the next, and as absurd in the one attitude as he is abject in the other. He falls in love at first sight and makes a fool of himself on unknown ground while with men he is ready to swear eternal friendship or undying enmity before he has had time to know anything whatever about the object of his regard or his dislike. In consequence he is being perpetually associated with shaky names and brought into questionable positions. He is full of confidence in himself on every occasion, and is given to making the most positive assertions on things he knows nothing about; when afterwards he is obliged to retract and to own himself mistaken. But he is just as full of self-abasement when, like vaulting ambition, he has overleaped himself and fallen into mistakes and failures unawares. He makes rash bets about things of which he has the best information; so he says; and will not be staved off by those who know what folly he is committing, but 4 insists on writing himself down after Dogberry at the cost of just so much. He backs the worst player at billiards on the strength of a chance hazard, and bets on the losing hand at whist. He goes into wild speculations in the city, where he is certain to land a pot of money according to his own account and whence he comes with empty pockets, as you foretold and warned. He takes up with all manner of doubtful schemes and yet more doubtful promoters; but he will not be advised. Is he not gushing? and does not the quality of gushingness include an Arcadian belief in the virtue of all the world?

The gushing man is the very pabulum of sharks and sharpers; and it is he whose impressibility and gullible good-nature supply wind for the sails of half the rotten schemes afloat. Full of faith in his fellows, and of belief in a brilliant future to be had by good luck and not by hard work, he cannot bring himself to doubt either men or measures; unless indeed his gushingness takes the form of suspicion, and then he goes about delivering himself of accusations not one of which he can substantiate by the weakest bulwark of fact, and doubting the soundness of investments as safe as the Three per Cents.

In manner the gushing man is familiar and caressing. He may be patronizing or playful according to the bent of his own nature. If the first, he will call his superior, My dear boy, and pat him on the back encouragingly; if the second, he will put his arm schoolboy fashion round the neck of any man of note who has the misfortune of his intimacy, and 5 call him Old fellow, or Governor, or rex meus, as he is inclined. With women his familiarity is excessively offensive. He gives them pet names, or calls to them by their Christian names from one end of the room to the other, and pats and paws them in all fraternal affectionateness, after about the same length of acquaintanceship as would bring other men from the bowing stage to that of shaking hands. His manners throughout are enough to compromise the toughest reputation; and one of the worst

misfortunes that can befall a woman whose circumstances lay her specially open to slander and misrepresentation is to include among her friends a gushing man of energetic tendencies, on the look-out to do her a good turn if he can, and anxious to let people see on what familiar terms he stands with her. He means nothing in the least degree improper when he puts his arm round her waist, calls her My dear and even Darling in a loud voice for all the world to hear; or when he seats himself at her table before folk to write her private messages, which he makes believe to be of so much importance that they must not be spoken aloud, and which are of no importance at all. He is only familiar and gushing; and he would be the first to cry out against the evil imagination of the world which saw harm in what he does with such innocent intent.

The gushing man has one grave defect—he is not safe nor secret. From no bad motive, but just from the blind propulsion of gushingness, he cannot keep a secret, and he is sure to let out sooner or later all 6 he knows. He holds back nothing of his friends nor of his own—not even when his honour is engaged in the trust; being essentially loose-lipped, and with his emotional life always bubbling up through the thin crust of conventional reserve. Not that he means to be dishonourable; he is only gushing and unrestrained. Hence every friend he has knows all about him. His latest lover learns the roll-call of all his previous loves; and there is not a man in his club, with whom he is on speaking terms, who does not know as much. Women who trust themselves to gushing men simply trust themselves to broken reeds; and they might as well look for a sieve that will hold water as expect a man of the sieve nature to keep their secret, whatever it may cost them and him to divulge it.

As a theorist the gushing man is for ever advocating untenable opinions and taking up with extreme doctrines, which he announces confidently and out of which he can be argued by the first opponent he encounters. The facility with which he can be bowled over on any ground—he calls it being converted—is in fact one of his most striking characteristics; and a gushing man rushes from the school of one professor to that of another, his zeal unabated, no matter how many his reconversions. He is always finding the truth, which he never retains; and the loudest and most active in damning a cast-off doctrine is the gushing man who has once followed it. As a leader, he is irresistible to both boys and women. 7 His enthusiastic, unreflecting, unballasted character finds a ready response in the youthful and feminine nature; and he is the idol of a small knot of ardent worshippers, who believe in him as the logical and well-balanced man is never believed in. He takes them captive by a community of imagination, of impulsiveness, of exaggeration; and is followed just in proportion to his unfitness to lead.

This is the kind of man who writes sentimental novels, with a good deal of love laced with a vague form of pantheism or of weak evangelical religion, to suit all tastes; or he is great in a certain kind of indefinite poetry which no one has yet been found to

understand, save perhaps, a special Soul Sister, which is the subdued version among us of the more suggestive Spiritual Wife. He adores the feminine virtues, which he places far beyond all the masculine ones; and expatiates on the beauty of the female character which he thinks is to be the rule of the future. Perhaps though, he goes off into panegyrics on the Vikings and the Berserkers; or else plunges boldly into the mists of the Arthurian era, and gushes in obsolete English about chivalry and the Round Table, Sir Launcelot and the Holy Graal, to the bewilderment of his entranced audience to whom he does not supply a glossary. In religion he is generally a mystic and always in extremes. He can never be pinned down to logic, to facts, to reason; and to his mind the golden mean is the sin for which the Laodicean Church was cursed. Feeling and emotion and imagination 8 do all the work of the world according to him; and when he is asked to reason and to demonstrate, he answers, with the lofty air of one secure of the better way, that he Loves, and that Love sees further and more clearly than reason.

As the strong-minded woman is a mistake among women, so is the gushing man among men. Fluid, unstable, without curb to govern or rein to guide, he brings into the masculine world all the mental frailties of the feminine, and adds to them the force of his own organization as a man. Whatever he may be he is a disaster; and at all times is associated with failure. He is the revolutionary leader who gets up abortive risings—the schemer whose plans run into sand—the poet whose books are read only by schoolgirls, or lie on the publisher's shelves uncut, as his gushingness bubbles over into twaddle or exhales itself in the smoke of obscurity—the fanatic whose faith is more madness than philosophy—the man of society who is the butt of his male companions and the terror of his lady acquaintances—the father of a family which he does his best, unintentionally, to ruin by neglect, which he calls nature, or by eccentricity of training, which he calls faith—and the husband of a woman who either worships him in blind belief, or who laughs at him in secret, as heart or head preponderates in her character. In any case he is a man who never finds the fitting time or place; and who dies as he has lived, with everything about him incomplete.

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SWEET SEVENTEEN.

A vast amount of poetry has always been thrown round that special time of a woman's life when,

Standing with reluctant feet
Where the brook and river meet,

she is no longer a child and yet not quite a woman—that transition time between the closed bud and the full-blown flower which we in England express by the term, among others, of Sweet Seventeen. Without meaning to be sentimental, or to envelope things in a golden haze wrought by the imagination only and nowhere to be found in fact, we cannot deny the peculiar charm which belongs to a girl of this age, if she is nice, and neither pert nor silly. Besides, it is not only what she is that interests us, but what she will be; for this is the time when the character is settling into its permanent form, so that the great thought of every one connected with her is, How will she turn out? Into what kind of woman will the girl develop? and, What kind of life will she make for herself?

Certainly Sweet Seventeen may be a most unlovely 10 creature, and in fact she often is; a creature hard and forward, having lost the innocence and obedience of childhood and having gained nothing yet of the tact and grace of womanhood; a creature whose hopes and thoughts are all centred on the time when she shall be brought out and have her fling of flirting and fine dresses with the rest. Or she may be only a gauche and giggling schoolgirl, with a mind as narrow as her life, given up to the small intrigues and scandals of the dormitory and the playground—a girl who scamps her lessons and cheats her masters; whose highest efforts of intellect are shown in the cleverness with which she can break the rules of the establishment without being found out; who thinks talking at forbidden times, peeping through forbidden windows, giving silly nicknames to her companions and teachers, and telling silly secrets with less truth than ingenuity in them, the greatest fun imaginable, and all the greater because of the spice of rebellion and perversity with which her folly is dashed. Or she may be a mere tomboy, regretting her sex and despising its restraints; cultivating schoolboy slang and aping schoolboy habits; ridiculing her sisters and disliked by her companions, while thinking girlhood a bore and womanhood a mistake in exact proportion to its feminality. Or she may be a budding miss, shy and awkward, with no harm in her and as little good—a mere sketch of a girl, without a leading line as yet made out or the dominant colour so much as indicated.

11 Sometimes she is awkward in another way, being studious and preoccupied—when she passes for odd and original, and is partly feared, partly disliked, and wholly misunderstood by her own young world; and sometimes she has a cynical contempt for men and beauty and pleasure and dress, when she will make herself ridiculous by her revolt against all the canons of good taste and conventionality. But after her début in tattered garments of severe colours and ungainly cut, she will probably end her days as a frantic Fashionable, the salvation of whose soul depends on the faultless propriety of her wardrobe. The eccentricities of Sweet Seventeen not unfrequently revenge themselves by an exactly opposite extravagance of maturity. But though there are enough and to spare of girls according to all these patterns, the Sweet Seventeen of one's affections is none of them. And yet she is not always the same, but has her different presentations, her varying facets, which give her variety of charm and beauty.

The best and loveliest thing about Sweet Seventeen is her sense of duty—for the most part a new sense. She no longer needs to be told what to do; she has not to be kept to her tasks by the fear of authority nor the submissive grace of obedience; but of her own free will, because understanding that it is her duty and that duty is a holier thing than self-will, she conscientiously does what she does not like to do, and cheerfully gives up what she desires without being driven or exhorted. She has generally 12 before her mind some favourite heroine in a girl's novel, who goes through much painful discipline and comes out all the brighter for it in the end; and she makes noble resolves of living as worthily as her model. She comforts her soul too, with passages from Longfellow and Tennyson and the 'Christian Year,' and learns long extracts from 'Evangeline' and the 'Idyls;' poetry having an almost magical influence over her, nearly as powerful as the Sunday sermons to which she listens so devoutly and tries so patiently to understand. For the first time she wakes to a dim sense of her own individuality, and confesses to herself that she has a life of her own, apart from and extraneous to her mere family membership. She is not only the sister or the daughter living with and for her parents or her brothers and sisters, but she is also herself, with a future of her own not to be shared with them, not to be touched by them. And she begins to have vague dreams of this future and its hero—dreams that are as much of fairyland as if they were of the young prince coming over the sea in a golden boat to find the princess in a tower of brass waiting for him.

Quite impersonal, and with a hero only in the clouds, nevertheless these dreams are suggested by the special circumstances of her life, by her favourite books or the style of society in which she has been placed. The young prince is either a beautiful and high-souled clergyman—not unlike the young vicar or the new curate, but infinitely more beautiful—an 13 apostle in the standing collar and single-breasted coat of the nineteenth century; or he is an artist in a velvet blouse and with flowing hair, living in a world of beauty such as no Philistine can imagine; or he is a gallant sailor, with blue eyes and a loose necktie, looking up to heaven in a gale, and thinking of his mother and sisters at

home and of the one still more beloved, when he certainly ought to be thinking of tarry ropes and coarse sailcloth; or he is a magnificent young officer heading his men at a charge, and looking supremely well got up and handsome. This is the kind of futur she dreams of when she dreams at all, which is not often. The reality of her mature life is perhaps a stolid square-set squire, or a prosaic city merchant without the thinnest thread of romance in his composition; while her own life, which was to be such a lovely poem of graceful usefulness and heroic beauty, sinks into the prosaic routine of housekeeping and society, the sigh after the vanished ideal growing fainter and fainter as the weight of fact grows heavier.

Married men are all sacred to Sweet Seventeen when she is a good girl; so are engaged men. For the matter of that, she believes that nothing could induce her to marry either a widower or one who had been already engaged, as nothing could induce her to marry any man under five foot eleven, or with a snub nose or sandy whiskers. Sweet Seventeen has in general the most profound aversion for boys. To be sure she may have her favourites—very few and 14 very seldom; but she mostly thinks them stupid or conceited, and impartially resents either their awkward attentions to herself or their assumptions of superiority. An abnormally clever boy—the Poet-Laureate or George Stephenson of his generation—is her detestation, because he is odd and unlike every one else; while the one that she dislikes least among them is the school hero, who is first in the sports and takes all the prizes, and who goes through life loved by every one and never famous.

For her several brothers she has a range of entirely different feelings. Her younger schoolboy brothers she regards as the torments of her existence, whose unkempt hair, dirty boots and rude manners are her special crosses, to be borne with patience, tempered by an active endeavour after reform. But the more advanced, and those who are older than herself, are her loves for whom she has an enthusiastic admiration, and whose future she believes in as something specially brilliant and successful. If only slightly older or younger than herself, she impresses them powerfully with the sentiment of her superiority, and patronizes them—kindly enough; but she makes them feel the ineffable supremacy of her sex, and how that she by virtue of her womanhood is a glorified creature beside them—an Ariel to their Caliban.

Now too, she begins to speak to her mother on more equal terms; to criticize her dress, and to make her understand that she considers her old-fashioned and inclined to be dowdy. She ties her bonnet-strings for 15 her; arranges her cap; smartens up her old dress and compels her to buy a new one; and, while considering her immeasurably ancient, likes her to look nice, and thinks her in her own way beautiful. Sometimes she opposes and quarrels with her, if the mother has less tact than arbitrariness. But this is not her natural state; for one of the characteristics of Sweet Seventeen is her love for her

mother and her need of better counsel and guidance; so that if she comes into opposition with her it is only through extreme pain, and the bitter teaching of tyranny and injustice. This is just the age indeed, when the mother's influence is everything to a girl; and when a silly, an unjust, or an unprincipled woman is the very ruin of her life. But with a low or evil-natured mother we seldom see a Sweet Seventeen worth the trouble of writing about: which shows at least one thing—the importance of the womanly influence at such a time, and how so much that we blame in our modern girls lies to the account of their mothers.

Great tact is required with Sweet Seventeen in such society as is allowed her; care to bring her out a little without obtruding her on the world, without making her forward and consequential, and without attracting too much attention to her. She is no longer a child to be shut away in the nursery, but she is not yet entitled to the place and consideration of a member of society. And yet it would be cruel to debar her wholly from all that is going on in the house. To be sure there is the governess, as well as mamma, to 16 look after her manners and to give her rope enough and not too much; but by the time a girl is seventeen a governess has ceased to be the autocrat ex officio, and she obeys her or not according to their respective strengths. Still, the governess or mamma is for the most part at her elbow; and Sweet Seventeen, if well brought up, is left very little to her own guidance, and sees the world only through half-opened doors.

Girls of this age are often wonderfully sad, and full of a kind of wondering despair at the sin and misery they are beginning to learn. They take up extreme views in religion and talk largely on the nothingness of pleasure and the emptiness of the world; and many fair young creatures whom their elders, laden with sorrowful experience, think full of hope and joy, are ready to give up all the pleasure of life, and to lay down life itself, for very disgust of that of which they know nothing. They delight in sorrowful lamentations and sentimental regrets put into rhyme; and one of the funniest things in the world is to see a girl dancing with the merriest in the evening, and to hear her talking broken-hearted pessimism in the morning. It is merely an example of the old proverb about the meeting of extremes; vacuity leading to the same results as experience.

But however she takes this unknown life, it is always in an unreal and romantic aspect. Some of more robust mind delight in the bolder stories of Greece and Rome, and wish they had played a part in the sensational heroism of those grand old times; 17 while others go to Venice, and make pictures for themselves out of the gliding gondolas and the mysterious Council of Ten, the lovely ladies with grim old fathers and high-handed brothers acting as gaolers, and the handsome cavaliers serenading them in the moonlight. That is their idea of love. They have no perception of anything warmer. It is all romance and poetry, and tender glances from afar, and long and patient wooing under difficulties and a little danger, with scarce a word spoken, and nothing more

expressive than a flower furtively given, or a fleeting pressure of the finger tips. They know nothing else and expect nothing else. Their cherry is without stone, their bird without bone, their orange without rind, as in the old song; and they imagine a love as unreal as all the rest.

When thrown into actualities, though—say when left motherless, and the eldest girl of perhaps a large family with a father to comfort and a young brood to see after—Sweet Seventeen is often very beautiful in her degree, and rises grandly to her position. Sometimes the burden of her responsibilities is too much for her tender shoulders, and she is overweighted, and fails. Sometimes too she is tyrannical and selfish in such a position, and uses her power ill; and sometimes she is careless and good-humoured, when they all scramble up together, through confusion, dirt and disorder, till the close time is over, and they scatter themselves abroad. Sometimes she is a martyr, and makes herself and every one else 18 uncomfortable by the perpetual demonstration of her martyrdom, and how she considers herself sacrificed and put upon. Indeed she is not unfrequently a martyr from other causes than heavy duties, being fond of adopting unworkable views which cannot run in the family groove anyhow. If she falls upon this rock she is in her glory; youth being marvellously proud of voluntary crucifixion, and thinking itself especially ill-used because it must be made conformable and is prevented from making itself ridiculous.

But Sweet Seventeen is intolerant of all moral differences. What she holds to be right is the absolute, the one sole and only just law; and she thinks it tampering with sin to allow that any one else has an equal right with herself to a contrary opinion. But on the whole she is a pleasant, loveable interesting creature; and one's greatest regret about her is that she is so often in the hands of unsuitable guides, and that her powers and noble impulses get so stunted and shadowed by the commonplace training which is her general lot, and the low aims of life which are the only ones held out to her.

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THE HABIT OF FEAR.

The mind, like the body, contracts tricks and habits which in time become automatic and involuntary—habits of association, tricks of repetition, of which the excess is monomania, but which, without attaining to quite that extreme, become more or less masters of the brain and directors of the thoughts. And, of all these tricks of the mind, the habit of fear is the most insidious and persistent. It is seldom that any one who has once given in to it is able to clear himself of it again. However unreasonable it may be, the trick clings, and it would take an exceptionally strong intellect to be convinced of its folly and learn the courage of common-sense. But this is just the intellect which does not allow itself to contract the habit in the beginning; a coward being for the most part a washy, weak kind of being, with very little backbone anyhow. We do not mean by this fear that which is physical and personal only, though this is generally the sole idea which people have of the word; but moral and mental cowardice as well. Personal fear indeed, is common enough, and as pitiable as it is common; and we are ashamed to 20 say that it is not confined to women, though naturally it is more predominant with them than with men.

As for women, the tyranny of fear lies very heavy on them, taking the flavour out of many a life which else would be perfectly happy; being often the only bitter drop in a cup full of sweetness. But how bitter that drop is!—bitter enough to destroy all the sweetness of the rest. Some women live in the perpetual presence of dread, both mental and personal. It surrounds them like an atmosphere; it clothes them like a garment; day by day, and from night to morning, it dogs their steps and sits like a nightmare on their hearts; it is their very root work of sensation, and they could as soon live without food as live without fear.

Ludicrous as many of their terrors are, we still cannot help pitying these poor self-made martyrs of imaginary danger. Take that most familiar of all forms of fear among women, the fear of burglars, and let us imagine for a moment the horror of the life which is haunted by a nightly dread—by a terror that comes with as unfailing regularity as the darkness—and measure, if we can, the amount of anguish that must be endured before death comes to take off the torture. There are many women to whom night is simply this time of torture, never varying, never relieved. They dare not lock their doors, because then they would be at the mercy of the man who sooner or later is to come in at the window; and if they hear the boards creak or the 21 furniture crack they are in agonies because of the man who they are sure is in the house, and who will come in at the door.

They cannot sleep if they have not looked all about the room—under the bed, behind the curtains, into the closet, where perhaps a dress hanging a little fantastically gives them a nervous start that lasts for the night.

But though they search so diligently they would probably faint on the spot if they so much as saw the heels of the housebreaker they are looking for. Yet you cannot reason with these poor creatures. You cannot deny the fact that burglars have been found before now secreted in bedrooms; and you cannot pooh-pooh the murders and housebreakings which are reported in the newspapers; so you have nothing to say to their argument that things which have happened once may happen again, and that there is no reason why they specially should be exempt from a misfortune to which others have been subjected. But you feel that their terrors are just so much pith and substance taken out of their strength; and that if they could banish the fear of burglars from their minds they would be so much the more valuable members of society, while the exorcism of their dismal demon would be so much the better for themselves.

It is the same in everything. If they are living in the country, and go up to London lodgings, they take the ground floor for fear of fire and being burnt alive in their beds. If they go from London to 22 the country they see an escaped convict or a murderer in every ragged reaper asking for work, or every tramp that begs for broken victuals at the door. The country to them is full of dangers. In the shooting season they are sure they will be shot if they go near a wood or a turnip-field. They think they will be gored to death if they meet a meek-eyed cow going placidly through the lane to her milking; and you might as well try to march them up to the cannon's mouth as induce them to cross a field where cattle are grazing. If they are driving, and the horses are going at full trot, they say they are running away and clutch the driver's arm nervously. As travellers they are in a state of not wholly unreasonable apprehension the whole time the railway journey lasts. They wait at Folkestone for days for a smooth crossing; and when they are on board they call a breeze a gale, and make sure they are bound for the bottom if the sea chops enough to rock the boat so much as a cradle. If they go over a Swiss pass they say their prayers and shut their eyes till it is over; and they are horribly afraid of banditti on every foot of Italian ground, besides firmly believing in the complicity with brigands of all the innkeepers and vetturini.

Their fear extends to all who belong to them, for whom they conjure up scenes of deadly disaster so soon as they are out of sight. Their fancy is faceted, like the eyes of a fly, and they worry themselves and every one else by exaggerating every 23 chance of danger into a certainty of destruction. When an epidemic is abroad, they are sure all the children will take it; and if they have taken it, they are sure they will never get over it. In illness indeed, those people who have allowed themselves to fall into the habit of fear are especially full of foreboding; not because they are more loving, more sympathetic than

others, but because they are more timid and less hopeful. If you believe them, no one will recover who is in any way seriously attacked; and the smallest ailment in themselves or their friends is the sure forerunner of a mortal sickness. They make no allowance for the elastic power of human nature; and they dislike hope and courage in others, thinking you unfeeling in exact proportion to your cheerfulness.

Morally this same habit of fear deteriorates, because it weakens and narrows, the whole nature. So far from following Luther's famous advice—Sin boldly and leave the rest to God—their sin is their very fear, their unconquerable distrust. These are the people who regard our affections as snares and all forms of pleasure as so many waymarks on the road to perdition—who would narrow the circle of human life to the smallest point both of feeling and action, because of the sin in which, according to them, the whole world is steeped. They see guilt everywhere, but innocence not at all. Their minds are set to the trick of terror; and fear of the power of the devil and the anger of God weighs on them 24 like an iron chain from which there is no release. This is not so much from delicacy of conscience as from simple moral cowardice; for you seldom find these very timid people lofty-minded or capable of any great act of heroism. On the contrary, they are generally peevish and always selfish; self-consideration being the tap-root of their fears, though the cause is assigned to all sorts of pretty things, such as acute sensibilities, keen imagination, bad health, tender conscience, delicate nerves—to anything in fact but the real cause, a cowardly habit of fear produced by continual moral selfishness, by incessant thought of and regard for themselves.

Nothing is so depressing as the society of a timid person, and nothing is so infectious as fear. Live with any one given up to an eternal dread of possible dangers and disasters, and you can scarcely escape the contagion, nor, however brave you may be, maintain your cheerfulness and faculty of faith. Indeed, as timid folks crave for sympathy in their terrors—that very craving being part of their malady of fear—you cannot show them a cheerful countenance under pain of offence, and seeming to be brutal in your disregard of what so tortures them. Their fears may be simply absurd and irrational, yet you must sympathize with them if you wish even to soothe; argument or common-sense demonstration of their futility being so much mental ingenuity thrown away.

Fear breeds suspicion too, and timid people are 25 always suspecting ill of some one. The deepest old diplomatist who has probed the folly and evil of the world from end to end, and who has sharpened his wits at the expense of his trust, is not more full of suspicion of his kind than a timid, superstitious, world-withdrawn man or woman given up to the tyranny of fear. Every one is suspected more or less, but chiefly lawyers, servants and all strangers. Any demonstration of kindness or interest at all different from the ordinary jogtrot of society fills them with undefined suspicion and dread; and, fear being in some degree the product of a diseased imagination, the 'probable' causes

for anything they do not quite understand would make the fortune of a novel-writer if given him for plots. If any one wants to hear thrilling romances in course of actual enactment, let him go down among remote and quiet-living country people, and listen to what they have to say of the chance strangers who may have established themselves in the neighbourhood, and who, having brought no letters of introduction, are not known by the aborigines. The Newgate Calendar or Dumas' novels would scarcely match the stories which fear and ignorance have set afoot.

Fearful folk are always on the brink of ruin. They cannot wait to see how things will turn before they despair; and they cannot hope for the best in a bad pass. They are engulfed in abysses which never open, and they die a thousand deaths before the supreme moment actually arrives. The smallest 26 difficulties are to them like the straws placed crosswise over which no witch could pass; the beneficent action of time, either as a healer of sorrow or a revealer of hidden mercies, is a word of comfort they cannot accept for themselves, how true soever it may be for others; the doctrine that chances are equal for good as well as for bad is what they will not understand; and they know of no power that can avert the disaster, which perhaps is simply a possibility not even probable, and which their own fears only have arranged. If they are professional men, having to make their way, they are for ever anticipating failure for to-day and absolute destruction for to-morrow; and they bemoan the fate of the wife and children sure to be left to poverty by their untimely decease, when the chances are ten to one in favour of the apportioned threescore and ten years. Life is a place of suffering here and a place of torment hereafter; yet they often wish to die, reversing Hamlet's decision by thinking the mystery of unknown ills preferable to the reality of those they have on hand.

Over such minds as these the vaticinations of such a prophet as Dr. Cumming have peculiar power; and they accept his gloomy interpretations of the Apocalypse with a faith as unquestioning as that with which they accept the Gospels. They have a predilection indeed for all terrifying prophecies, and cast the horoscope of the earth and foretell the destruction of the universe with marvellous exactitude. Their minds are set to the trick of foreboding, and 27 they live in the habit of fear, as others live in the habit of hope, of resignation, or of careless good-humour and indifference. There is nothing to be done with them. Like drinking, or palsy, or a nervous headache, or a congenital deformity, the habit is hopeless when once established; and those who have begun by fear and suspicion and foreboding will live to the end in the atmosphere they have created for themselves. The man or woman whose mind is once haunted by the nightly fear of a secreted burglar will go on looking for his heels so long as eyesight and the power of locomotion continue; and no failure in past Apocalyptic interpretations will shake the believer's faith in those of which the time for fulfilment has not yet arrived. It is a trick which has rooted, a habit that has crystallized by use into a formation; and

there it must be left, as something beyond the power of reason to remedy or of experience to destroy.

ESSAYS UPON SOCIAL SUBJECTS BOOK FIRSTBY ELIZA LYNN LINTON

OLD LADIES.

The world is notoriously unjust to its veterans, and above all it is unjust to its ancient females. Everywhere, and from all time, an old woman has been taken to express the last stage of uselessness and exhaustion; and while a meeting of bearded dotards goes by the name of a council of sages, and its deliberations are respected accordingly, a congregation of grey-haired matrons is nothing but a congregation of old women, whose thoughts and opinions on any subject whatsoever have no more value than the chattering of so many magpies. In fact the poor old ladies have a hard time of it; and if we look at it in its right light, perhaps nothing proves more thoroughly the coarse flavour of the world's esteem respecting women than this disdain which they excite when they are old. And yet what charming old ladies one has known at times!—women quite as charming in their own way at seventy as their grand-daughters are at seventeen, and all the more so because they have no design now to be charming, because they have given up the attempt to please for the reaction of praise, and long 29 since have consented to become old though they have never drifted into unpersonableness nor neglect. While retaining the intellectual vivacity and active sympathies of maturity, they have added the softness, the mellowness, the tempering got only from experience and advancing age. They are women who have seen and known and read a great deal; and who have suffered much; but whose sorrows have neither hardened nor soured them—but rather have made them even more sympathetic with the sorrows of others, and pitiful for all the young. They have lived through and lived down all their own trials, and have come out into peace on the other side; but they remember the trials of the fiery passage, and they feel for those who have still to bear the pressure of the pain they have overcome. These are not women much met with in society; they are of the kind which mostly stays at home and lets the world come to them. They have done with the hurry and glitter of life, and they no longer care to carry their grey hairs abroad. They retain their hold on the affections of their kind; they take an interest in the history, the science, the progress of the day; but they rest tranquil and content by their own fireside, and they sit to receive, and do not go out to gather.

The fashionable old lady who haunts the theatres and drawing-rooms, bewigged, befrizzled, painted, ghastly in her vain attempts to appear young, hideous in her frenzied clutch at the pleasures melting from her grasp, desperate in her wild hold on a life that is 30 passing away from her so rapidly, knows nothing of the quiet dignity and happiness of her ancient sister who has been wise enough to renounce before she lost. In her own house, where gather a small knot of men of mind and women of character, where the

young bring their perplexities and the mature their deeper thoughts, the dear old lady of ripe experience, loving sympathies and cultivated intellect holds a better court than is known to any of those miserable old creatures who prowl about the gay places of the world, and wrestle with the young for their crowns and garlands—those wretched simulacra of womanhood who will not grow old and who cannot become wise. She is the best kind of old lady extant, answering to the matron of classic times—to the Mother in Israel before whom the tribes made obeisance in token of respect; the woman whose book of life has been well studied and closely read, and kept clean in all its pages. She has been no prude however, and no mere idealist. She must have been wife, mother and widow; that is, she must have known many things of joy and grief and have had the fountains of life unsealed. However wise and good she may be, as a spinster she has had only half a life; and it is the best half which has been denied her. How can she tell others, when they come to her in their troubles, how time and a healthy will have wrought with her, if she has never passed through the same circumstances? Theoretic comfort is all very well, but one word of experience 31 goes beyond volumes of counsel based on general principles and a lively imagination.

One type of old lady, growing yearly scarcer, is the old lady whose religious and political theories are based on the doctrines of Voltaire and Paine's Rights of Man—the old lady who remembers Hunt and Thistlewood and the Birmingham riots; who talks of the French Revolution as if it were yesterday; and who has heard so often of the Porteus mob from poor papa that one would think she had assisted at the hanging herself. She is an infinitely old woman, for the most part birdlike, chirrupy, and wonderfully alive. She has never gone beyond her early teaching, but is a fossil radical of the old school; and she thinks the Gods departed when Hunt and his set died out. She is an irreligious old creature, and scoffs with more cleverness than grace at everything new or earnest. She would as lief see Romanism rampant at once as this newfangled mummery they call Ritualism; and Romanism is her version of the unchaining of Satan. As for science—well, it is all very wonderful, but more wonderful she thinks than true; and she cannot quite make up her mind about the spectroscope or protoplasm. Of the two, protoplasm commends itself most to her imagination, for private reasons of her own connected with the Pentateuch; but these things are not so much in her way as Voltaire and Diderot, Volney and Tom Paine, and she is content to abide by her ancient cairns and to leave the leaping-poles of science to younger and 32 stronger hands. This type of old lady is for the most part an ancient spinster, whose life has worn itself away in the arid deserts of mental doubt and emotional negation. If she ever loved it was in secret, some thin-lipped embodied Idea long years ago. Most likely she did not get even to this unsatisfactory length, but contented herself with books and discussions only. If she had ever honestly loved and been loved, perhaps she would have gone beyond Voltaire, and have learned something truer than a scoff.

The old lady of strong instinctive affections, who never reflects and never attempts to restrain her kindly weaknesses, stands at the other end of the scale. She is the grandmother par excellence, and spends her life in spoiling the little ones, cramming them with sugar-plums and rich cake whenever she has the chance, and nullifying mamma's punishments by surreptitious gifts and goodies. She is the dearly beloved of our childish recollections; and to the last days of our life we cherish the remembrance of the kind old lady with her beaming smile, taking out of her large black reticule, or the more mysterious recesses of her unfathomable pocket, wonderful little screws of paper which her withered hands thrust into our chubby fists; but we can understand now what an awful nuisance she must have been to the authorities, and how impossible she made it to preserve anything like discipline and the terrors of domestic law in the family.

33 The old lady who remains a mere child to the end; who looks very much like a faded old wax doll with her scanty hair blown out into transparent ringlets, and her jaunty cap bedecked with flowers and gay-coloured bows; who cannot rise into the dignity of true womanliness; who knows nothing useful; can give no wise advice: has no sentiment of protection, but on the contrary demands all sorts of care and protection for herself—she, simpering and giggling as if she were fifteen, is by no means an old lady of the finest type. But she is better than the leering old lady who says coarse things, and who, like Béranger's immortal creation, passes her time in regretting her plump arms and her well-turned ankle and the lost time that can never be recalled, and who is altogether a most unedifying old person and by no means nice company for the young.

Then there is the irascible old lady, who rates her servants and is free with full-flavoured epithets against sluts in general; who is like a tigress over her last unmarried daughter, and, when crippled and disabled, still insists on keeping the keys, which she delivers up when wanted only with a snarl and a suspicious caution. She has been one of the race of active housekeepers, and has prided herself on her exceptional ability that way for so long that she cannot bear to yield, even when she can no longer do any good; so she sits in her easy chair, like old Pope and Pagan in Pilgrim's Progress, and gnaws her fingers at the younger world 34 which passes her by. She is an infliction to her daughter for all the years of her life, and to the last keeps her in leading-strings, tied up as tight as the sinewy old hands can knot them; treating her always as an irresponsible young thing who needs both guidance and control, though the girl has passed into the middle-aged woman by now, shuffling through life a poor spiritless creature who has faded before she has fully blossomed, and who dies like a fruit that has dropped from the tree before it has ripened.

Twin sister to this kind is the grim female become ancient; the gaunt old lady with a stiff backbone, who sits upright and walks with a firm tread like a man; a leathery old lady, who despises all your weak slips of girls that have nerves and headaches and cannot

walk their paltry mile without fatigue; a desiccated old lady, large-boned and lean, without an ounce of superfluous fat about her, with keen eyes yet, with which she boasts that she can thread a needle and read small print by candlelight; an indestructible old lady, who looks as if nothing short of an earthquake would put an end to her. The friend of her youth is now a stout, soft, helpless old lady, much bedraped in woollen shawls, given to frequent sippings of brandy and water, and ensconced in the chimney corner like a huge clay figure set to dry. For her the indestructible old lady has the supremest contempt, heightened in intensity by a vivid remembrance of the time when they were friends and rivals. Ah, poor Laura, she says, straightening herself; she 35 was always a poor creature, and see what she is now! To those who wait long enough the wheel always comes round, she thinks; and the days when Laura bore away the bell from her for grace and sweetness and loveableness generally are avenged now, when the one is a mere mollusc and the other has a serviceable backbone that will last for many a year yet.

Then there is the musical old lady, who is fond of playing small anonymous pieces of a jiggy character full of queer turns and shakes, music that seems all written in demi-semi-quavers, and that she gives in a tripping, catching way, as if the keys of the piano were hot. Sometimes she will sing, as a great favour, old-world songs which are almost pathetic for the thin and broken voice that chirrups out the sentiment with which they abound; and sometimes, as a still greater favour, she will stand up in the dance, and do the poor uncertain ghosts of what were once steps, in the days when dancing was dancing and not the graceless lounge it is now. But her dancing-days are over, she says, after half-a-dozen turns; though, indeed, sometimes she takes a frisky fit and goes in for the whole quadrille:—and pays for it the next day.

The very dress of old ladies is in itself a study and a revelation of character. There are the beautiful old women who make themselves like old pictures by a profusion of soft lace and tender greys; and the stately old ladies who affect rich rustling silks and sombre velvet; and there are the original and individual 36 old ladies, who dress themselves after their own kind, like Mrs. Basil Montagu, Miss Jane Porter, and dear Mrs. Duncan Stewart, and have a cachet of their own with which fashion has nothing to do. And there are the old women who wear rusty black stuffs and ugly helmet-like caps; and those who affect uniformity and going with the stream, when the fashion has become national—and these have been much exercised of late with the strait skirts and the new bonnets. But Providence is liberal and milliners are fertile in resources. In fact, in this as in all other sections of humanity, there are those who are beautiful and wise, and those who are foolish and unlovely; those who make the best of things as they are, and those who make the worst, by treating them as what they are not; those who extract honey, and those who find only poison. For in old age, as in youth, are to be found beauty, use, grace and value, but in different aspects and on another platform. And the folly is when

this difference is not allowed for, or when the possibility of these graces is denied and their utility ignored.

ESSAYS UPON SOCIAL SUBJECTS BOOK FIRSTBY ELIZA LYNN LINTON

VOICES.

Far before the eyes or the mouth or the habitual gesture, as a revelation of character, is the quality of the voice and the manner of using it. It is the first thing that strikes us in a new acquaintance, and it is one of the most unerring tests of breeding and education. There are voices which have a certain truthful ring about them—a certain something, unforced and spontaneous, that no training can give. Training can do much in the way of making a voice, but it can never compass more than a bad imitation of this quality; for the very fact of its being an imitation, however accurate, betrays itself like rouge on a woman's cheeks, or a wig, or dyed hair. On the other hand, there are voices which have the jar of falsehood in every tone, and which are as full of warning as the croak of the raven or the hiss of the serpent. These are in general the naturally hard voices which make themselves caressing, thinking by that to appear sympathetic; but the fundamental quality strikes up through the overlay, and a person must be very dull indeed who cannot detect the pretence in that slow, drawling, would-be affectionate 38 voice, with its harsh undertone and sharp accent whenever it forgets itself.

But without being false or hypocritical, there are voices which puzzle as well as disappoint us, because so entirely inharmonious with the appearance of the speaker. For instance, there is that thin treble squeak which we sometimes hear from the mouth of a well-grown portly man, when we expected the fine rolling utterance which would have been in unison with his outward seeming. And, on the other side of the scale, where we looked for a shrill head-voice or a tender musical cadence, we get that hoarse chest-voice with which young and pretty girls sometimes startle us. This voice is in fact one of the characteristics of the modern girl of a certain type; just as the habitual use of slang is characteristic of her, or that peculiar rounding of the elbows and turning out of the wrists—which gestures, like the chest-voice, instinctively belong to men only and have to be learned before they can be practised by women.

Nothing betrays feeling so much as the voice, save perhaps the eyes; and these can be lowered, and so far their expression hidden. In moments of emotion no skill can hide the fact of disturbed feeling by the voice; though a strong will and the habit of self-control can steady it when else it would be failing and tremulous. But not the strongest will, nor the largest amount of self-control, can keep it natural as well as steady. It is deadened, veiled, compressed, like a wild creature tightly bound and unnaturally 39 still. One feels that it is done by an effort, and that if the strain were relaxed for a

moment the wild creature would burst loose in rage or despair—and that the voice would break into the scream of passion or quiver down into the falter of pathos. And this very effort is as eloquent as if there had been no holding down at all, and the voice had been left to its own impulse unchecked.

Again, in fun and humour, is it not the voice even more than the face that is expressive? The twinkle of the eye, the hollow in the under lip, the dimples about the mouth, the play of the eyebrow, are all aids certainly; but the voice! The mellow tone that comes into the utterance of one man; the surprised accents of another; the fatuous simplicity of a third; the philosophical acquiescence of a fourth when relating the most outrageous impossibilities—a voice and manner peculiarly Transatlantic, and indeed one of the American forms of fun—do we not know all these varieties by heart? have we not veteran actors whose main point lies in one or other of these varieties? and what would be the drollest anecdote if told in a voice which had neither play nor significance? Pathos too—who feels it, however beautifully expressed so far as words may go, if uttered in a dead and wooden voice without sympathy? But the poorest attempts at pathos will strike home to the heart if given tenderly and harmoniously. And just as certain popular airs of mean association can be made into church music by slow 40 time and stately modulation, so can dead-level literature be lifted into passion or softened into sentiment by the voice alone.

We all know the effect, irritating or soothing, which certain voices have over us; and we have all experienced that strange impulse of attraction or repulsion which comes from the sound of the voice alone. And generally, if not absolutely always, the impulse is a true one, and any modification which increased knowledge may produce is never quite satisfactory. Certain voices grate on our nerves and set our teeth on edge; and others are just as calming as these are irritating, quieting us like a composing draught, and setting vague images of beauty and pleasantness afloat in our brains.

A good voice, calm in tone and musical in quality, is one of the essentials for a physician—the 'bedside voice' which is nothing if not sympathetic by constitution. Not false, not made up, not sickly, but tender in itself, of a rather low pitch, well modulated and distinctly harmonious in its notes, it is the very opposite of the orator's voice, which is artificial in its management and a made voice. Whatever its original quality may be, the orator's voice bears the unmistakeable stamp of art and is artificial. It may be admirable; telling in a crowd; impressive in an address; but it is overwhelming and chilling at home, partly because it is always conscious and never self-forgetting.

An orator's voice, with its careful intonation and 41 accurate accent, would be as much out of place by a sick-bed as Court trains and brocaded silk for the nurse. There are certain men who do a good deal by a hearty, jovial, fox-hunting kind of voice—a voice a

little thrown up for all that it is a chest-voice—a voice with a certain undefined rollick and devil-may-care sound in it, and eloquent of a large volume of vitality and physical health. That, too, is a good property for a medical man. It gives the sick a certain fillip, and reminds them pleasantly of health and vigour. It may have a mesmeric kind of effect upon them—who knows?—so that it induces in them something of its own state, provided it be not overpowering. But a voice of this kind has a tendency to become insolent in its assertion of vigour, swaggering and boisterous; and then it is too much for invalided nerves, just as mountain-winds or sea-breezes would be too much, and the scent of flowers or of a hayfield oppressive.

The clerical voice again, is a class-voice—that neat, careful, precise voice, neither wholly made nor yet natural—that voice which never strikes one as hearty nor as having a really genuine utterance, but which is not entirely unpleasant if one does not require too much spontaneity. The clerical voice, with its mixture of familiarity and oratory as that of one used to talk to old women in private and to hold forth to a congregation in public, is as distinct in its own way as the mathematician's handwriting; and any one can pick out blindfold his man from a knot of 42 talkers, without waiting to see the square-cut collar and close white tie. The legal voice is different again; but this is rather a variety of the orator's than a distinct species—a variety standing midway between that and the clerical, and affording more scope than either.

The voice is much more indicative of the state of the mind than many people know of or allow. One of the first symptoms of failing brain power is in the indistinct or confused utterance; no idiot has a clear nor melodious voice; the harsh scream of mania is proverbial; and no person of prompt and decisive thought was ever known to hesitate nor to stutter. A thick, loose, fluffy voice too, does not belong to the crisp character of mind which does the best active work; and when we meet with a keen-witted man who drawls, and lets his words drip instead of bringing them out in the sharp incisive way that should be natural to him, we may be sure there is a flaw somewhere, and that he is not 'clear grit' all through.

We all have our company voices, as we all have our company manners; and, after a time, we get to know the company voices of our friends, and to understand them as we understand their best dresses and state service. The person whose voice absolutely refuses to put itself into company tone startles us as much as if he came to a state dinner in a shooting-jacket. This is a different thing from the insincere and flattering voice, which is never laid aside while it has its object to gain, and which affects to be one 43 thing when it means another. The company voice is only a little bit of finery, quite in its place if not carried into the home, where however, silly men and women think they can impose on their house-mates by assumptions which cannot stand the test of domestic ease. The lover's voice is of course sui generis; but there is another kind of voice which

one sometimes hears that is quite as enchanting—the rich, full, melodious voice which irresistibly suggests sunshine and flowers, and heavy bunches of purple grapes, and a wealth of physical beauty at all four corners. Such a voice is Alboni's; such a voice we can conceive Anacreon's to have been; with less lusciousness and more stateliness, such a voice was Walter Savage Landor's. His was not an English voice; it was too rich and accurate; yet it was clear and apparently thoroughly unstudied, and was the very perfection of art. There was no greater treat of its kind than to hear Landor read Milton or Homer.

Though one of the essentials of a good voice is its clearness, there are certain lisps and catches which are pretty, though never dignified; but most of them are painful to the ear. It is the same with accents. A dash of brogue; the faintest suspicion of the Scotch twang; even a little American accent—but very little, like red-pepper to be sparingly used, as indeed we may say with the others—gives a certain piquancy to the voice. So does a Continental accent generally; few of us being able to distinguish the French accent from the German, the Polish from the Italian, or the 44 Russian from the Spanish, but lumping them all together as 'a foreign accent' broadly. Of all the European voices the French is perhaps the most unpleasant in its quality, and the Italian the most delightful. The Italian voice is a song in itself; not the sing-song voice of an English parish schoolboy, but an unnoted bit of harmony. The French voice is thin, apt to become wiry and metallic; a head-voice for the most part, and eminently unsympathetic; a nervous, irritable voice, that seems more fit for complaint than for love-making; and yet how laughing, how bewitching it can make itself!—never with the Italian roundness, but câlinante in its own half-pettish way, provoking, enticing, arousing. There are some voices which send you to sleep and others which stir you up; and the French voice is of the latter kind when setting itself to do mischief and work its own will.

Of all the differences lying between Calais and Dover, perhaps nothing strikes the traveller more than the difference in the national voice and manner of speech. The sharp, high-pitched, stridulous voice of the French, with its clear accent and neat intonation, is exchanged for the loose, fluffy utterance of England, where clear enunciation is considered pedantic; where brave men cultivate a drawl and pretty women a deep chest-voice; where well-educated people think it no shame to run all their words into each other, and to let consonants and vowels drip out like so many drops of water, with not much more distinction 45 between them; and where no one knows how to educate his organ artistically, without going into artificiality and affectation. And yet the cultivation of the voice is an art, and ought to be made as much a matter of education as a good carriage or a legible handwriting. We teach our children to sing, but we never teach them to speak, beyond correcting a glaring piece of mispronunciation or so. In consequence of which we have all sorts of odd voices among us—short yelping voices like dogs; purring voices like cats; croakings and lispings and quackings and

chatterings; a very menagerie in fact, to be heard in a room ten feet square, where a little rational cultivation would have reduced the whole of that vocal chaos to order and harmony, and would have made what is now painful and distasteful beautiful and seductive.

ESSAYS UPON SOCIAL SUBJECTS BOOK FIRSTBY ELIZA LYNN LINTON

BURNT FINGERS.

An old proverb says that a burnt child dreads the fire. If so, the child must be uncommonly astute, and with a power of reasoning by analogy in excess of impulsive desire rarely found either in children or adults. As a matter of fact, experience goes a very little way towards directing folks wisely. People often say how much they would like to live their lives over again with their present experience. That means, they would avoid certain specific mistakes of the past, of which they have seen and suffered from the issue. But if they retained the same nature as now, though they might avoid a few special blunders, they would fall into the same class of errors quite as readily as before, the gravitation of character towards circumstance being always absolute in its direction.

Our blunders in life are not due to ignorance so much as to temperament; and only the exceptionally wise among us learn to correct the excesses of temperament by the lessons of experience. To the mass of mankind these lessons are for the time only, and prophesy nothing of the future. They hold them to have been mistakes of method, not of principle, and 47 they think that the same lines more carefully laid would lead to a better superstructure in the future, not seeing that the fault was organic and in those very initial lines themselves. No impulsive nor wildly hopeful person, for instance, ever learns by experience, so long as his physical condition remains the same. No one with a large faculty of faith—that is, credulous and easily imposed on—becomes suspicious or critical by mere experience. How much soever people of this kind have been taken in, in times past, they are just as ready to become the prey of the spoiler in times to come; and it would be sad, if it were not so silly, to watch how inevitably one half of the world gives itself up as food whereon the roguery of the other half may wax fat.

The person of facile confidence, whose secrets have been blazed abroad more than once by trusted friends, makes yet another and another safe confidant—quite safe this time; one of whose fidelity there is no doubt—and learns when too late that one panier percé is very like another panier percé. The speculating man, without business faculty or knowledge, who has burnt his fingers bare to the bone with handling scrip and stock, thrusts them into the fire again so soon as he has the chance. The gambler blows his fingers just cool enough to shuffle the cards for this once only, sure that this time hope will tell no flattering tale, that ravelled ends will knit themselves up into a close and seemly garment, and heaven itself work a miracle in his favour against the 48 law of mathematical certainty. In fact we are all gamblers in this way, and play our hazards for the stakes of faith and hope. We all burn our fingers again and again at some fire or

another; but experience teaches us nothing; save perhaps a more hopeless, helpless resignation towards that confounded ill-luck of ours, and a weary feeling of having known it all before when things fall out amiss and we are blistered in the old flames.

In great matters this persistency of endeavour is sublime, and gets a wealth of laurel crowns and blue ribands; but in little things it is obstinacy, want of ability to profit by experience, denseness of perception as to what can and what cannot be done; and the apologue of Bruce's spider gets tiresome if too often repeated. The most hopelessly inapt people at learning why they burnt their fingers last time, and how they will burn them again, are those who, whatever their profession, are blessed or cursed with what is called the artistic temperament. A man will ruin himself for love of a particular place; for dislike of a certain kind of necessary work; for the prosecution of a certain hobby. Is he not artistic? and must he not have all the conditions of his life exactly square with his desires? else how can he do good work? So he goes on burning his fingers through self-indulgence, and persists in his unwisdom to the end of his life. He will paint his unsaleable pictures or write his unreadable books; his path is one in which the money-paying public will not follow; but though his 49 very existence depends on the following of that paying public, he will not stir an inch to meet it, but keeps where he is because he likes the particular run of his hedgerows; and spends his days in thrusting his hand into the fire of what he chooses to call the ideal, and his nights in abusing the Philistinism of the world which lets him be burnt.

And what does any amount of experience do for us in the matter of friendship or love? As the world goes round, and our credulous morning darkens into a more sceptical twilight, we believe as a general principle—a mere abstraction—that all new friends are just so much gilt gingerbread; and that a very little close holding and hard rubbing brings off the gilt, and leaves nothing but a slimy, sticky mess of little worth as food and of none as ornament. And yet, if of the kind to whom friendship is necessary for happiness, we rush as eagerly into the new affection as if we had never philosophized on the emptiness of the old, and believe as firmly in the solid gold of our latest cake as if we had never smeared our hands with one of the same pattern before. So with love. A man sees his comrades fluttering like enchanted moths about some stately man-slayer, some fair and shining light set like a false beacon on a dangerous cliff to lure men to their destruction. He sees how they singe and burn in the flame of her beauty, but he is not warned. If one's own experience teaches one little or nothing, the experience of others goes for even less, and no man yet was 50 ever warned off the destructive fire of love because his companions had burnt their fingers there before him and his own are sure to follow.

It is the same with women; and in a greater degree. They know all about Don Juan well enough. They are perfectly well aware how he treated A. and B. and C. and D. But when

it comes to their own turn, they think that this time surely, and to them, things will be different and he will be in earnest. So they slide down into the alluring flame, and burn their fingers for life by playing with forbidden fire. But have we not all the secret belief that we shall escape the snares and pitfalls into which others have dropped and among which we choose to walk? that fire will not burn our fingers, at least so very badly, when we thrust them into it? and that, by some legerdemain of Providence, we shall be delivered from the consequences of our own folly, and that two and two may be made to count five in our behalf? Who is taught by the experience of an unhappy marriage, say? No sooner has a man got himself free from the pressure of one chain and bullet, than he hastens to fasten on another, quite sure that this chain will be no heavier than the daintiest little thread of gold, and this bullet as light and sweet as a cowslip-ball. Everything that had gone wrong before will come right this time; and the hot bars of close association with an uncomfortable temper and unaccommodating habits will be only like a juggling trick, and will burn no one's heart or hands.

51 People too, who burn their fingers in giving good advice unasked, seldom learn to hold them back. With an honest intention, and a strong desire to see right done, it is difficult to avoid putting our hands into fires with which we have no business. While we are young and ardent, it seems to us as if we have distinct business with all fraud, injustice, folly, wilfulness, which we believe a few honest words of ours will control and annul; but nine times out of ten we only burn our own hands, while we do not in the least strengthen those of the right nor weaken those of the wrong. We may say the same of good-natured people. There was never a row of chestnuts roasting at the fire for which your good-natured oaf will not stretch out his hand at the bidding and for the advantage of a friend. Experience teaches the poor oaf nothing; not even that fire burns. To put his name at the back of a bill, just as a mere form; to lend his money, just for a few days; or to do any other sort of self-immolating folly, on the faithful promise that the fire will not burn nor the knife cut—it all comes as easy to men of the good-natured sort as their alphabet. Indeed it is their alphabet, out of which they spell their own ruin; but so long as the impressionable temperament lasts—so long as the liking to do a good-natured action is greater than caution, suspicion, or the power of analogical reasoning—so long will the oaf make himself the catspaw of the knave, till at last he has left himself no fingers 52 wherewith to pluck out the chestnuts for himself or another.

The first doubt of young people is always a source of intense suffering. Hitherto they have believed what they saw and all they heard; and they have not troubled themselves with motives nor facts beyond those given to them and lying on the surface. But when they find out for themselves that seeming is not necessarily being, and that all people are not as good throughout as they thought them, then they suffer a moral shock which often leads them into a state of practical atheism and despair. Many young people give up altogether when they first open the book of humanity and begin to read beyond the

title-page; and, because they have found specks in the cleanest parts, they believe that nothing is left pure. They are as much bewildered as horror-struck, and cannot understand how any one they have loved and respected should have done this or that misdeed. Having done it, there is nothing left to love nor respect further. It is only by degrees that they learn to adjust and apportion, and to understand that the whole creature is not necessarily corrupt because there are a few unhealthy places here and there. But in the beginning this first scorching by the fire of experience is very painful and bad to bear. Then they begin to think the knowledge of the world, as got from books, so wonderful, so profound; and they look on it as a science to be learned by much studying of aphorisms. 53 They little know that not the most affluent amount of phrase knowledge can ever regulate that class of action which springs from a man's inherent disposition; and that it is not facts which teach but self-control which prevents.

After very early youth we all have enough theoretical knowledge to keep us straight; but theoretical knowledge does nothing without self-knowledge, or its corollary, self-control. The world has never yet got beyond the wisdom of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes; and Solomon's advice to the Israelitish youth lounging round the gates of the Temple is quite as applicable to young Hopeful coming up to London chambers as it was to them. Teaching of any kind, by books or events, is the mere brute weapon; but self-control is the intelligent hand to wield it. To burn one's fingers once in a lifetime tells nothing against a man's common-sense nor dignity; but to go on burning them is the act of a fool, and we cannot pity the wounds, however sore they may be. The Arcadian virtues of unlimited trust and hope and love are very sweet and lovely; but they are the graces of childhood, not the qualities of manhood. They are charming little finalities, which do not admit of modification nor of expansion; and in a naughty world, to go about with one's heart on one's sleeve, believing every one and accepting everything to be just as it presents itself, is offering bowls of milk to tigers, and meeting armed men with 54 a tin sword. Such universal trust can only result in a perpetual burning of one's fingers; and a life spent in pulling out hot chestnuts from the fire for another's eating is by no means the most useful nor the most dignified to which a man can devote himself.

ESSAYS UPON SOCIAL SUBJECTS BOOK FIRSTBY ELIZA LYNN LINTON

DÉSŒUVREMENT

Perhaps we ought to apologize for using a foreign label, but there is no one English word which gives the full meaning of désœuvrement. Only paraphrases and accumulations would convey the many subtle shades contained in it; and paraphrases and accumulations are inconvenient as headings. But if we have not the word, we have a great deal of the thing; for désœuvrement is an evil unfortunately not confined to one country nor to one class; and even we, with all our boasted Anglo-Saxon energy, have people among us as unoccupied and purposeless as are to be found elsewhere. Certainly we have nothing like the Neapolitan lazzaroni who pass their lives in dozing in the sun; but that is more because of our climate than our condition, and if our désœuvrés do not doze out of doors, it by no means follows that they are wide awake within.

No state is more unfortunate than this listless want of purpose which has nothing to do, which is interested in nothing, and which has no serious object in life; and the drifting, aimless temperament, which merely waits and does not even watch, is the most 56 disastrous that a man or woman can possess. Feverish energy, wearing itself out on comparative nothings, is better than the indolence which folds its hands and makes neither work nor pleasure; and the most microscopic and restless perception is more healthful than the dull blindness which goes from Dan to Beersheba, and finds all barren.

If even death itself is only a transmutation of forces—an active and energizing change—what can we say of this worse than mental death? How can we characterize a state which is simply stagnation? Not all of us have our work cut out and laid ready for us to do; very many of us have to seek for objects of interest and to create our own employment; and were it not for the energy which makes work by its own force, the world would still be lying in barbarism, content with the skins of beasts for clothing and with wild fruits and roots for food. But the désœuvrés know nothing of the pleasures of energy; consequently none of the luxuries of idleness—only its tedium and monotony. Life is a dull round to them of alternate vacancy and mechanical routine; a blank so dead that active pain and positive sorrow would be better for them than the passionless negation of their existence. They love nothing; they hope for nothing; they work for nothing; to-morrow will be as to-day, and to-day is as yesterday was; it is the mere passing of time which they call living—a moral and mental hybernation broken up by no springtime waking.

57 Though by no means confined to women only, this disastrous state is nevertheless more frequently found with them than with men. It is comparatively rare that a man—at least an Englishman—is born with so little of the activity which characterizes manhood as to rest content without some kind of object for his life, either in work or in pleasure, in study or in vice. But many women are satisfied to remain in an unending désœuvrement, a listless supineness that has not even sufficient active energy to fret at its own dullness.

We see this kind of thing especially in the families of the poorer class of gentry in the country. If we except the Sunday school and district visiting, neither of which commends itself as a pleasant occupation to all minds—both in fact needing a little more active energy than we find in the purely désœuvré class—what is there for the unmarried daughters of a family to do? There is no question of a profession for any of them. Ideas travel slowly in country places, and root themselves still more slowly, even yet; and the idea of woman's work for ladies is utterly inadmissible by the English gentleman who can leave a modest sufficiency to his daughters—just enough to live on in the old house and in the old way, without a margin for luxuries, but above anything like positive want. There is no possibility then of an active career in art or literature; of going out as a governess, as a hospital nurse, or as a Sister. There is only home, with the possible and not very probable chance 58 of marriage as the vision of hope in the distant future. And that chance is very small and very remote; for the simple reason—there is no one to marry.

There are the young collegians who come down in reading parties; the group of Bohemian artists, if the place be picturesque and not too far from London; the curate; and the new doctor, fresh from the hospitals, who has to make his practice out of the poorer and more outlying clientèle of the old and established practitioners of the place. But collegians do not marry, and long engagements are proverbially hazardous; Bohemian artists are even less likely than they to trouble the surrogate; and the curate and the doctor can at the best marry only one apiece of the many who are waiting. The family keeps neither carriages nor horses, so that the longest tether to which life can be carried, with the house for the stake, is simply the three or four miles which the girls can walk out and back. And the visiting list is necessarily comprised within this circle. There is then, absolutely nothing to occupy nor to interest. The whole day is spent in playing over old music, in needlework, in a little desultory reading, such as is supplied by the local book society; all without other object than that of passing the time. The girls have had nothing like a thorough education in anything; they are not specially gifted, and what brains they have are dormant and uncultivated. There is not even enough housework to occupy their time, unless they were to send away the servants. Besides, domestic work of 59 an active kind is vulgar, and gentlemen and gentlewomen do not allow their daughters to do it. They may help in the housekeeping; which means merely

giving out the week's supplies on Monday and ordering the dinner on other days, and which is not an hour's occupation in the week; and they can do a little amateur spudding and raking among the flower-beds when the weather is fine, if they care for the garden; and they can do a great deal of walking if they are strong; and this is all that they can do. There they are, four or five well-looking girls perhaps, of marriageable age, fairly healthy and amiable, and with just so much active power as would carry them creditably through any work that was given them to do, but with not enough originative energy to make them create work for themselves out of nothing.

In their quiet uneventful sphere, with the circumscribed radius and the short tether, it would be very difficult for any women but those few who are gifted with unusual energy to create a sufficient human interest; to ordinary young ladies it is impossible. They can but make-believe, even if they try—and they don't try. They can but raise up shadows which they would fain accept as living creatures if they give themselves the trouble to evoke anything at all, and they don't give themselves the trouble. They simply live on from day to day in a state of mental somnolency—hopeless, désœuvrées, inactive; just drifting down the smooth slow current of time, with not a ripple nor an eddy by the way.

60 Quiet families in towns, people who keep no society and live in a self-made desert apart though in the midst of the very vortex of life, are alike in the matter of désœuvrement; and we find exactly the same history with them as we find with their country cousins, though apparently their circumstances are so different. They cannot work and they may not play; the utmost dissipation allowed them is to look at the outside of things—to make one of the fringe of spectators lining the streets and windows on a show day, and this but seldom; or to go once or twice a year to the theatre or a concert. So they too just lounge through their life, and pass from girlhood to old age in utter désœuvrement and want of object. Year by year the lines about their eyes deepen, their smile gets sadder, their cheeks grow paler; while the cherished secret romance which even the dullest life contains gets a colour of its own by age, and a firmness of outline by continual dwelling on, which it had not in the beginning. Perhaps it was a dream built on a tone, a look, a word—may be it was only a half-evolved fancy without any basis whatever—but the imagination of the poor désœuvrée has clung to the dream, and the uninteresting dullness of her life has given it a mock vitality which real activity would have destroyed.

This want of healthy occupation is the cause of half the hysterical reveries which it is a pretty flattery to call constancy and an enduring regret; and we find it as absolutely as that heat follows from flame, 61 that the mischievous habit of bewailing an irrevocable past is part of the désœuvrée condition in the present. People who have real work to do cannot find time for unhealthy regrets, and désœuvrement is the most fertile source of sentimentality to be found.

The désœuvrée woman of means and middle age, grown grey in her want of purpose and suddenly taken out of her accustomed groove, is perhaps more at sea than any others. She has been so long accustomed to the daily flow of certain lines that she cannot break new ground and take up with anything fresh, even if it be only a fresh way of being idle. Her daughter is married; her husband is dead; her friend who was her right hand and manager-in-chief has gone away; she is thrown on her own resources, and her own resources will not carry her through. She generally falls a prey to her maid, who tyrannizes over her, and a phlegmatic kind of despair, which darkens the remainder of her life without destroying it. She loses even her power of enjoyment, and gets tired before the end of the rubber which is the sole amusement in which she indulges. For désœuvrement has that fatal reflex action which everything bad possesses, and its strength is in exact ratio with its duration.

Women of this class want taking in hand by the stronger and more energetic. Many even of those who seem to do pretty well as independent workers, men and women alike, would be all the better for being farmed out; and désœuvrées women especially 62 want extraneous guidance, and to be set to such work as they can do, but cannot make. An establishment which would utilize their faculties, such as they are, and give them occupation in harmony with their powers, would be a real salvation to many who would do better if they only knew how, and would save them from stagnation and apathy. But society does not recognize the existence of moral rickets, though the physical are cared for; consequently it has not begun to provide for them as moral rickets, and no Proudhon has yet managed to utilize the désœuvrés members of the State. When they do find a place of retreat and adventitious support, it is under another name.

The retired man of business, utterly without object in his new conditions, is another portrait that meets us in country places. He is not fit for magisterial business; he cannot hunt nor shoot nor fish; he has no literary tastes; he cannot create objects of interest for himself foreign to the whole experience of his life. The idleness which was so delicious when it was a brief season of rest in the midst of his high-pressure work, and the country which was like Paradise when seen in the summer only and at holiday time, make together just so much blank dullness now that he has bound himself to the one and fixed himself in the other. When he has spelt over every article in the Times, pottered about his garden and his stables, and irritated both gardener and groom by interfering in what he does not understand, the day's work is at 63 an end. He has nothing more to do but eat his dinner and sip his wine, doze over the fire for a couple of hours, and go to bed as the clock strikes ten.

This is the reality of that long dream of retirement which has been the golden vision of hope to many a man during the heat and burden of the day. The dream is only a dream.

Retirement means désœuvrement; leisure is tedium; rest is want of occupation truly, but want of interest, want of object, want of purpose as well; and the prosperous man of business, who has retired with a fortune and broken energies, is bored to death with his prosperity, and wishes himself back to his desk or his counter—back to business and something to do. He wonders, on retrospection, what there was in his activity that was distasteful to him; and thinks with regret that perhaps, on the whole, it is better to wear out than to rust out; that désœuvrement is a worse state than work at high pressure; and that life with a purpose is a nobler thing than one which has nothing in it but idleness:—whereof the main object is how best to get rid of time.

ESSAYS UPON SOCIAL SUBJECTS BOOK FIRSTBY ELIZA LYNN LINTON

THE SHRIEKING SISTERHOOD.

We by no means put it forward as an original remark when we say that Nature does her grandest works of construction in silence, and that all great historical reforms have been brought about either by long and quiet preparation, or by sudden and authoritative action. The inference from which is, that no great good has ever been done by shrieking; that much talking necessarily includes a good deal of dilution; and that fuss is never an attribute of strength nor coincident with concentration. Whenever there has been a very deep and sincere desire on the part of a class or an individual to do a thing, it has been done not talked about; where the desire is only halfhearted, where the judgment or the conscience is not quite clear as to the desirableness of the course proposed, where the chief incentive is love of notoriety and not the intrinsic worth of the action itself—personal kudos, and not the good of a cause nor the advancement of humanity—then there has been talk; much talk; hysterical excitement; a long and prolonged cackle; and heaven and earth called to witness that an egg has been laid wherein lies the germ of a future chick—after proper incubation.

65 Necessarily there must be much verbal agitation if any measure is to be carried the fulcrum of which is public opinion. If you have to stir the dry bones you must prophesy to them in a loud voice, and not leave off till they have begun to shake. Things which can only be known by teaching must be spoken of, but things which have to be done are always better done the less the fuss made about them; and the more steadfast the action, the less noisy the agent. Purpose is apt to exhale itself in protestations, and strength is sure to exhaust itself by a flux of words. But at the present day what Mr. Carlyle called the Silences are the least honoured of all the minor gods, and the babble of small beginnings threatens to become intolerable. We all 'think outside our brains,' and the result is not conducive to mental vigour. It is as if we were to set a plant to grow with its heels in the air, and then look for roots, flowers and fruit, by the process of excitation and disclosure.

One of our quarrels with the Advanced Women of our generation is the hysterical parade they make about their wants and their intentions. It never seems to occur to them that the best means of getting what they want is to take it, when not forbidden by the law—to act, not to talk; that all this running hither and thither over the face of the earth, this feverish unrest and loud acclaim are but the dilution of purpose through much speaking, and not the right way at all; and that to hold their tongues and do would

advance them by as many leagues as babble 66 puts them back. A small knot of women, 'terribly in earnest,' could move multitudes by the silent force of example. One woman alone, quietly taking her life in her own hands and working out the great problem of self-help and independence practically, not merely stating it theoretically, is worth a score of shrieking sisters frantically calling on men and gods to see them make an effort to stand upright without support, with interludes of reproach to men for the want of help in their attempt. The silent woman who quietly calculates her chances and measures her powers with her difficulties so as to avoid the probability of a fiasco, and who therefore achieves a success according to her endeavour, does more for the real emancipation of her sex than any amount of pamphleteering, lecturing, or petitioning by the shrieking sisterhood can do. Hers is deed not declamation; proof not theory; and it carries with it the respect always accorded to success.

And really if we think of it dispassionately, and carefully dissect the great mosaic of hindrances which women say makes up the pavement of their lives, there is very little which they may not do if they like—and can. They have already succeeded in reopening for themselves the practice of medicine, for one thing; and this is an immense opportunity if they know how to use it. A few pioneers, unhelped for the most part, steadily and without shrieking, stormed the barricades of the hospitals and dissecting-rooms; heroically bearing the shower of hard-mouthed missiles 67 with which they were pelted, and successfully forcing their way notwithstanding. But the most successful of them are those who held on with least excitement and who strove more than they declaimed; while others, by constitution belonging to the shrieking sisterhood, have comparatively failed, and have mainly succeeded in making themselves ridiculous. After some pressure but very little cackle—for here too the work was wanted, the desire real, and the workers in earnest—female colleges on a liberal and extended system of education have been established, and young women have now an opportunity of showing what they can do in brain work.

It is no longer by the niggardliness of men and the fault of an imperfect system if they prove intellectually inferior to the stronger sex; they have their dynamometer set up for them, and all they have to do is to register their relative strength—and abide the issue. All commerce, outside the Stock Exchange, is open to them equally with men; and there is nothing to prevent their becoming merchants, as they are now petty traders, or setting up as bill-brokers, commission agents, or even bankers—which last profession, according to a contemporary, they have actually adopted in New York, some ladies there having established a bank, which, so far as they have yet gone, they are said to conduct with deftness and ready arithmetic.

In literature they have competitors in men, but no monopolists. Indeed, they themselves have become 68 almost the monopolists of the whole section of light literature and

fiction; while nothing but absolute physical and mental incapacity prevents their taking the charge of a journal, and working it with female editor, sub-editor, manager, reporters, compositors, and even news-girls to sell the second edition at omnibus doors and railway stations. If a set of women chose to establish a newspaper and work it amongst themselves, no law could be brought to bear against them; and if they made it as philosophical as some, or as gushing as others, they might enter into a formidable rivalry with the old-established. They would have a fair hearing, or rather reading; they would not be 'nursed' nor hustled, and they would get just as much success as they deserved. To be sure, they do not yet sit on the Bench nor plead at the Bar. They are not in Parliament, and they are not even voters; while, as married women with unfriendly husbands and no protection-order, they have something to complain of, and wrongs which are in a fair way of being righted if the shrieking sisterhood does not frighten the world prematurely. But, despite these restrictions, they have a very wide circle wherein they can display their power, and witch the world with noble deeds, if they choose—and as some have chosen.

Of the representative 'working-women' in England, we find none who have shrieked on platforms nor made an hysterical parade of their work. Quietly, and with the dignity which comes by self-respect and 69 the consciousness of strength, they have done what it was in their hearts to do; leaving the world to find out the value of their labours, and to applaud or deride their independence. Mrs. Somerville asked no man's leave to study science and make herself a distinguished name as the result; nor did she find the need of any more special organization than what the best books, a free press and first-rate available teaching offered. Miss Martineau dived with more or less success into the forbidding depths of the 'dismal science,' at a time when political economy was shirked by men and considered as essentially unfeminine as top-boots and tobacco; and she was confessedly an advanced Liberal when to be a high Tory was part of the whole duty of woman. Miss Nightingale undertook the care of wounded soldiers without any more publicity than was absolutely necessary for the organization of her staff, and with not so much as one shriek. Rosa Bonheur laughed at those who told her that animal painting was unwomanly, and that she had better restrict herself to flowers and heads, as became the jeune demoiselle of conventional life; but she did not publish her programme of independence, nor take the world into her confidence and tell them of her difficulties and defiance. The Lady Superintendents of our own various sisterhoods have organized their communities and performed their works of charity with very faint blare of trumpets indeed; and we might enumerate many more who have quietly lived the life of action 70 and independence of which others have only raved, and who have done while their sisters shrieked. These are the women to be respected, whether we sympathize with their line of action or not; having shown themselves to be true workers, capable of sustained effort, and therefore worthy of the honour which belongs to strength and endurance.

Of one thing women may be very sure, though they invariably deny it; the world is glad to take good work from any one who will supply it. The most certain patent of success is to deserve it; and if women will prove that they can do the world's work as well as men, they will share with them in the labour and the reward; and if they do it better they will distance them. The appropriation of fields of labour is not so much a question of selfishness as of (hitherto) proved fitness; but if, in times to come, women can show better harvesting than men, can turn out more finished, more perfected, results of any kind, the world's custom will flow to them by the force of natural law, and they will have the most to do of that which they can do the best. If they wish to educate public opinion to accept them as equals with men, they can only do so by demonstration, not by shrieks. Even men, who are supposed to inherit the earth and to possess all the good things of life, have to do the same thing.

Every young man yet untried is only in the position of every woman; and, granting that he has not the deadweight of precedent and prejudice against 71 him, he yet has to win his spurs before he can wear them. But women want theirs given to them without winning; and moreover, ask to be taught how to wear them when they have got them. They want to be received as masters before they have served their apprenticeship, and to be put into office without passing an examination or submitting to competition. They scream out for a clear stage and favour superadded; and they ask men to shackle their own feet, like Lightfoot in the fairy tale, that they may then be handicapped to a more equal running. They do not remember that their very demand for help vitiates their claim to equality; and that if they were what they assume to be, they would simply take without leave asked or given, and work out their own social salvation by the irrepressible force of a concentrated will and in the silence of conscious strength.

While the shrieking sisterhood remains to the front, the world will stop its ears; and for every hysterical advocate 'the cause' loses a rational adherent and gains a disgusted opponent. It is our very desire to see women happy, noble, fitly employed and well remunerated for such work as they can do, which makes us so indignant with the foolish among them who obscure the question they pretend to elucidate, and put back the cause which they say they advance. The earnest and practical workers among women are a very different class from the shriekers; but we wish the world could dissociate them more clearly than it does at present, and discriminate between them, both in its censure and its praise.

ESSAYS UPON SOCIAL SUBJECTS BOOK FIRSTBY ELIZA LYNN LINTON

OTHERWISE-MINDED.

Every now and then we receive from America a word or a phrase which enriches the language without vulgarizing it—something, both more subtle and more comprehensive than our own equivalent, which we recognize at once as the better thing of the two. Thus 'otherwise-minded,' which some American writers use with such quaint force, is quite beyond our old 'contradictious' expressing the full meaning of contradictious and adding a great deal more. But if we have not hitherto had the word we have the thing, which is more to the purpose; and foremost among the powers which rule the world may be placed 'otherwise-mindedness' in its various phases of active opposition and passive immobility—the contradictiousness which must fight on all points and which will not assent to any. At home, otherwise-mindedness is an engine of tremendous power, ranking next to sulks and tears in the defensive armoury of women; while men for the most part use it in a more aggressive sense, and seldom content themselves with the passive quietude of mere inertness.

An otherwise-minded person, if a man, is almost 73 always a tyrant and a bully, with decided opinions as to his right of making all about him dance to his piping—his piping never giving one of their own measures. If a woman, she is probably a superior being subjected to domestic martyrdom while intended by nature for a higher intellectual life,—doomed to the drudgery of housekeeping while yearning for the æsthetic and panting after the ideal. She is generally dignified in her bearing and of a cold, unappeasable discontent. She neither scolds nor wrangles, though sometimes, no rule being without its exception, she is peevish and captious and degenerates into the commonplace of the Naggleton type. But in the main she bounds herself to the expression of her otherwise-mindedness in a stately if dogged manner, and shows a serene disdain for her opponents, which is a trifle more offensive than her undisguised satisfaction with herself. Nothing can move her, nothing beat her off her holding; but then she offers no points of attack. She is what she is on principle; and what can you say to an opposition dictated by motives all out of reach of your own miserable little groundling ideas? Where you advocate expediency, she maintains abstract principles; if you are lenient to weaknesses, she is stern to sin; if you would legislate for human nature as it is, she will have nothing less than the standard of perfection; and when you speak of the absolutism of facts, she argues on the necessity of keeping the ideal intact, no matter whether any one was ever known to 74 attain to it or not. But if she finds herself in different company from your own looser kind—say with Puritans of a strongly

ascetic caste—then she veers round to the other side, on the ground of fairness; and for the benefit of fanatics propounds a slip-shod easygoing morality which shuffles beyond your own lines. This she calls keeping out of extremes and discouraging exaggeration. This latter manifestation however, is not very frequently the case with women: the otherwise-minded among them being almost always of the rigid and ascetic class who despise the pleasant little vanities, the graceful frivolities, the loveable frailties which make life easy and humanity delightful, and who take their stand on the loftiest, the most unelastic, not to say the grimmest, ethics. They have had it borne in on them that they are to defy Baal and withstand; consequently they do defy him, and they do withstand, at all four corners stoutly.

To be otherwise-minded naturally implies having a mind; and of what use is intellect if it cannot see all through and round a subject, and pick the weak places into holes? Hence the otherwise-minded are uncompromising critics and terrible fellows at scenting their prey. As is the function of certain creatures—vultures, crows, flies, and others—so is that of these children of Zoilus when dealing with subjects not understood, or only guessed at with more or less blundering in the process.

Take one of the class at a lecture on the higher branches of a science of which he has not so much 75 as thoroughly mastered the roots, and wherein this higher analysis offers certain new and perhaps startling results. It would seem that the sole thing possible to him who is ignorant of the matter in hand is to listen and believe; but your otherwise-minded critic is not content with the tame modesty of humbleness. What if the subject be over his head, cannot he crane his neck and look? has he not common-sense to guide him? and may he not criticize in the block what he cannot dissect in detail? At the least he can look grave, and say something about the danger of a little knowledge; and fallen man's dangerous pride of intellect; and his absolute and eternal ignorance; and the lecturer not making his meaning clear—as how should he when he probably does not understand his own subject nor what he wanted to say?—and what becomes of accepted truths if such things are to be received? Be sure of this, that otherwise-mindedness must sling its stone, whether it knows exactly what it is aiming at or not. It not unfrequently happens that the stone is after the pattern of a boomerang, and comes back on the slinger's own pate with sounding effect, convicting him of ignorance if of nothing worse, and a love of opposition so great that it destroys both his power of perceiving truth and the sense of his own incapacity.

But the otherwise-minded is nothing if not superior to his company; and truth is after all relative as well as multiform, and needs continual nice 76 adjustment to make it balance fairly. The great representative assembly of humanity must have its independent members below the gangway who vote with no party; and if we were all on the right side the devil's advocate would have no work to do; so that even otherwise-mindedness on

the wrong side has its uses, and must not be wholly condemned. For the world would fare badly without its natural borers and hole-pickers, its finders-out of weak places, its stone walls to resist assertion and advance; and ants and worms make good mould for garden flowers.

The constitutionally otherwise-minded are the worst partizans in the world and never take up a cause heartily—never with more than one hand, that they may leave the other free for a bit of intellectual prestidigitation if need be, when their audience changes its character and complexion. The only time when they are devoted adherents is if their own family is decidedly in the opposite ranks, when they come out from among them with scrip and spear, and go over to the enemy without failing a single button of the uniform. This is specially true of young people and of women; both of whom call their natural love of opposition by the name of religious principle or moral duty. Youths just fresh from the schools, bent on the regeneration of mankind and thinking that they can do in a few years what society has been painfully labouring to accomplish ever since the first savage clubbed his neighbour for stealing his hoard of roots or carrying off his own private squaw, 77 are sure to be intensely otherwise-minded and to understand nothing of harmonious working with the old plant. Red Republicans under the family flag of purple and orange; free-thinkers in the church where the paternal High and Dry holds forth on Sundays on the principle of the divine inspiration of the English translation bound in calf and lettered cum privilegio; Romanists worshipping saints and relics in the very heart of the Peculiar People who put no trust in man nor works—we know them all; ardent, enthusiastic, uncompromising and horribly aggressive; with the down just shading their smooth young chins, and the great book of human life barely turned at the page of adolescence. Yet this is a form of otherwise-mindedness which, though we laugh at and are often annoyed by it, we must treat gently on the whole. We cannot be cruel to a fervour, even when insolently expressed, which we know the world will tame so soon, and which at the worst is often better than the dead level of conformity; even though its zeal is not unmixed with conceit, and a burning desire for the world's good is not free from a few slumbering embers of self-laudation and the 'last infirmity.'

In a house inhabited by the otherwise-minded—and one member of a family is enough to set the whole ruck awry—nothing is allowed to go smoothly or by default; nothing can be done without endless discussion; and all the well-oiled casters of compromise, good-nature, 'it does not signify,' &c., by 78 which life runs easily in most places are rusted or broken. At table there is an incessant cross-fire of objections and of arguments, more or less intemperately conducted and never coming to a satisfactory conclusion. There are so many places too, which have been rubbed sore by this perpetual chafing, that a stranger to the secrets of the domestic pathology is kept not only in a fever of annoyance, but in an ague of dread, at the temper shown about trifles, and the deadly offence that seems to lurk behind quite ordinary topics of conversation. Not knowing all

that has gone before, he is not prepared for the present uncomfortable aspect of things, and in fact is like a boy reading algebra, understanding nothing of what he sees, though the symbolizing letters are familiar enough to him. The family quarrel about everything; and when they do not quarrel they argue. If one wants to do something that must be done in concert, the others would die rather than unite; and days, seasons and wishes can never be got to work themselves into harmonious coalition. When they are out 'enjoying themselves'—language is arbitrary and the sense of words not always clear—they cannot agree on anything; and you may hear them fire off scornful squibs of otherwise-mindedness across the rows of prize flowers or in the intervals of one of Beethoven's sonatas. And if they cannot find cause for disagreement on the merits of the subject before them, they find it in each other. For otherwise-mindedness is like the ragged little 79 princess in the German fairy tale, who proved her royal blood by being unable to sleep on the top of seven feather-beds—German feather-beds—beneath all of which one single bean had been placed as the test of her sensibility. Give it but the chance of a scuffle, the ghost of a coat-tail to tread on, an imaginary chicken-bone among the down, and you may be sure that the opportunity will not be lost. When we are on the look-out for beans we shall find them beneath even seven feather-beds; and when shillelahs abound there will never be wanting the trail of a coat-tail across the path. So we find when we have to do with the otherwise-minded who will not take things pleasantly, and can never be got to see either beauty or value in their surroundings. Let one of these have a saint for a wife, and he will tell you saints are bores and sinners the only house-mates to be desired. Let him change his state, and this time pick up the sinner in longing for whom he has so often vexed the poor saint's soul, and he will find domestic happiness to consist in the companionship of a seraph of the most exalted kind. If he has Zenobia, he wants Griselda; if Semiramis, King Cophetua's beggar-maid. The dear departed, who was such a millstone in times past, becomes the emblem of all that is lovely in humanity when a shaft has to be thrown at the partner of times present; and the marriage that was notoriously ill-assorted is painted in gold and rose-colour throughout, and its discords are mended up into a full score of harmony 80 when the new wife or the new husband has to be snubbed, for no other reason than the otherwise-mindedness which cannot agree with what it has.

Children and servants come in for their share of this uncomfortable temper which reverses the old adage about the absent, and which, so far from making these in the wrong, transfers the burden of blame to those present and conveniently forgets its former litany of complaint. No one would be more surprised than those very absent if they heard themselves upheld as possessors of all possible virtues when, according to their memory, they had been little better than concretions of wickedness and folly in the days of their subjection to criticism. They need not flatter themselves. Could they return, or if they do return, to the old place, they will be sure to return to the old conditions; and the praise lavished on them when they are absent, by way of rebuke to those unlucky

ones on the spot, will be changed for their benefit into the blame and the rebuke familiar to them. In fact no circumstances whatever touch the central quality of the otherwise-minded. They must have something to bite, to grumble at, to rearrange, at least in wish, if not in deed. If only they had been consulted, nothing would have gone wrong that has gone wrong; and 'I told you so' is the shibboleth of their order. It is gall and wormwood to them when they are obliged to agree, and when, for very decency's sake, they must praise what indeed offers no points to condemn. But even when 81 they get caught in the trap of unanimity they contrive to say something quite unnecessary about evils which no one was thinking of, and which have nothing to do with the case in point. 'But' is their mystic word, their truncated form of the Tetragrammaton which rules the universe; and whatever their special private denomination, they all belong in bulk to the

Sect whose chief devotion lies
In odd perverse antipathies;
In falling out with that or this,
And finding somewhat still amiss.

ESSAYS UPON SOCIAL SUBJECTS BOOK FIRSTBY ELIZA LYNN LINTON

LIMP PEOPLE.

Vice is bad and malignant wickedness is worse, but beyond either in evil results to mankind is weakness; which indeed is the pabulum by which vice is fed and the agent by which malignity works. If every one in this world had a backbone, there would not be so much misery nor guilt as there is now; for we must give each individual of the 'cruel strong' a large following of weaker victims; and it would be easy to demonstrate that the progress of nations has always been in proportion to the number of stiff backbones among them. Yet unfortunately limp people abound, to the detriment of society and to their own certain sorrow; molluscs, predestined to be the food of the stronger, with no power of self-defence nor of self-support, but having to be protected against outside dangers if they are to be preserved at all;—and perhaps when you have done all that you can do, not safe even then, and most likely not worth the trouble taken about them. Open the gates for but a moment, and they are swept up by the first passer-by. Let them loose from your own sustaining hand, and they fall abroad in a mass of flabby helplessness, 83 unable to work, to resist, to retain—mere heaps of moral protoplasm, pitiable as well as contemptible; perhaps pitiable because so contemptible. See one of these poor creatures left a widow, if a woman—turned out of his office, if a man—and then judge of the value of a backbone by the miserable consequences of its absence. The widow is simply lost in the wilderness of her domestic solitude, as much so as would be a child if set in the midst of a pathless moor with no one to guide him to the safe highway. She may have money and she may have relations, but she is as poor as if she had nothing better than parish relief; and unless some one will take her up and manage everything for her conscientiously, she is as lonely as if she were an exile in a strange land. She has been so long used to lean on the stronger arm of her husband, that she cannot stand upright now that her support has been taken from her. Her servants make her their prey; her children tyrannize over her and ignore her authority; her boys go to the bad; her girls get fast and loud; all her own meek little ideas of modesty and virtue are rudely thrust to the wall; and she is obliged to submit to a family disorder which she neither likes nor encourages, but which she has not the strength to oppose nor the wisdom to direct. She may be the incarnation of all saintly qualities in her own person, but by mere want of strength she is the occasion by which a very pandemonium is possible; and the worst house of a 84 community is sure to be that of a quiet, gentle, molluscous little widow, without one single vicious proclivity but without the power to repress or even to rebuke vice in others.

A molluscous man too, suddenly ejected from his long-accustomed groove, where, like a toad embedded in the rock, he had made his niche exactly fitting to his own shape, presents just as wretched a picture of helplessness and unshiftiness. In vain his friends suggest this or that independent endeavour; he shakes his head, and says he can't—it won't do. What he wants is a place where he is not obliged to depend on himself; where he has to do a fixed amount of work for a fixed amount of salary; and where his fibreless plasticity may find a mould ready formed, into which it may run without the necessity of forging shapes for itself. Many a man of respectable intellectual powers has gone down into ruin, and died miserably, because of this limpness which made it impossible for him to break new ground or to work at anything whatsoever with the stimulus of hope only. He must be bolstered up by certainty, supported by the walls of his groove, else he can do nothing; and if he cannot get into this friendly groove, he lets himself drift into destruction.

In no manner are limp people to be depended on; their very central quality being fluidity, which is a bad thing to rest on. Take them in their family quarrels—and they are always quarrelling among themselves—you think they must have broken with 85 each other for ever; that surely they can never forget or forgive all the insolent expressions, the hard words, the full-flavoured epithets which they have flung at one another; but the next time you meet them they are quite good friends again, and going on in the old fluid way as if no fiery storms had lately troubled the domestic horizon. Perhaps they have induced you to take sides; if so, you may look out, for you are certain to be thrown over and to have the enmity of both parties instead of only one. They are much given to this kind of thing, and fond of making pellets for you to shoot; when, after the shot, they disclaim and disown you. They speak against each other furiously, tell you all the family secrets and make them worse and greater than they really are. If you are credulous for your own part you take them literally; and if highly moral, you probably act on their accusations in a spirit of rhadamanthine justice, and the absolute need of rewarding sin according to its sinfulness. Beware; their accusations are baseless as the wind, and acting on them will lead to your certain discomfiture. The only safe way with limp people is never to believe what they say; or, if you are forced to believe, never to translate your faith into deeds nor even words; never to commit yourself to partizanship in any form whatever. They do not intend it, in all probability, but by very force of their weakness limp people are almost invariably untruthful and treacherous. By the force too, of this same weakness, they are incapable 86 of anything like true friendship, and in fact make the most dangerous friends to be found. They are so plastic that they take the shape of every hand which holds them; and if you do not know them well, you may be deceived by their softness of touch, and think them sympathetic because they are fluid. They leave you full of promises to hold all you have told them sacred, and before an hour is out they have repeated to your greatest enemy every word you have said. They had not the faintest intention of doing so when they left you, but they 'slop about,' as the

Americans say; and sloppy folk cannot hold secrets. The traitors of life are the limp, much more than the wicked—people who let things be wormed out of them rather than intentionally betray them. They repent likely enough; Judas hanged himself; but of what good is their repentance when the mischief is done? Not all the tears in the world can put out the fire when once lighted, and to hang oneself because one has betrayed another will make no difference save in the number of victims which one's own weakness has created.

Limp men are invariably under petticoat government, and it all depends on chance and the run of circumstance whose petticoat is dominant. The mother's, for a long period; then the sisters'. If the wife's, there is sure to be war in the camp belonging to the invertebrate commander; for such a man creates infinitely more jealousy among his womankind than the most discursive and the most unjust. 87 He is a power, not to act, but to be used; and the woman who can hold him with the firmest grasp has necessarily the largest share of good things belonging. She can close or draw his purse-strings at pleasure. She can use his name and mask herself behind his authority at pleasure. He is the undying Jorkins who is never without a Spenlow to set him well up in front; and we can scarcely wonder that the various female Spenlows who shoot with his bow and manipulate his circumstances are jealous of each other to a frantic pitch—regarding his limpness, as they do, as so much raw material from which they can spin out their own strength.

As the mollusc has to become the prey of some one, the question simply resolves itself into whose? the new wife's or the old sisters'? Who shall govern, sitting on his shoulders? and to whom shall he be assigned captive? He generally inclines to his wife, if she is younger than he and has a backbone of her own; and you may see a limp man of this kind, with a fringe of old-rooted female epiphytes, gradually drop one after another of the ancient stock, till at last his wife and her relations take up all the space and are the only ones he supports. His own kith and kin go bare while he clothes her and hers in purple and fine linen; and the fatted calves in his stalls are liberally slain for the prodigals on her side of the house, while the dutiful sons on his own get nothing better than the husks.

Another characteristic of limp people is their 88 curious ingratitude. Give them nine-tenths of your substance, and they will turn against you if you refuse them the remaining tenth. Lend them all the money you can spare, and lend in utter hopelessness of any future day of reckoning, but refrain once for your own imperative needs, and they will leave your house open-mouthed at your stinginess. To be grateful implies some kind of retentive faculty; and this is just what the limp have not. Another characteristic of a different kind is the rashness with which they throw themselves into circumstances which they afterwards find they cannot bear. They never know how to calculate their

forces, and spend the latter half of their life in regretting what they had spent the former half in endeavouring to attain, or to get rid of, as it might chance. If they marry A. they wish they had taken B. instead; as house-mistresses they turn away their servants at short notice after long complaint, and then beg them to remain if by any means they can bribe them to stay. They know nothing of that clear incisive action which sets men and women at ease with themselves, and enables them to bear consequences, be they good or ill, with dignity and resignation.

A limp backboneless creature always falls foul of conditions, whatever they may be; thinking the right side better than the left, and the left so much nicer than the right, according to its own place of standing for the moment; and what heads plan and hands execute, lips are never weary of 89 bemoaning. In fact the limp, like fretful babies, do not know what they want, being unconscious that the whole mischief lies in their having a vertebral column of gristle instead of one of bone. They spread themselves abroad and take the world into their confidence—weep in public and rave in private—and cry aloud to the priest and the Levite passing by on the other side (maybe heavily laden for their own share) to come over and help them, poor sprawling molluscs, when no man but themselves can set them upright.

The confidences of the limp are told through a trumpet to all four corners of the sky, and are as easy to get at, with the very gentlest pressure, as the juice of an over-ripe grape. And no lessons of experience will ever teach them reticence, or caution in their choice of confidants.

Not difficult to press into the service of any cause whatever, they are the very curse of all causes which they assume to serve. They collapse at the first touch of persecution, of misunderstanding, of harsh judgment, and fall abroad in hopeless panic at the mere tread of the coming foe. Always convinced by the last speaker, facile to catch and impossible to hold, they are the prizes, the decoy ducks, for which contending parties fight, perpetually oscillating between the maintenance of old abuses and the advocacy of dangerous reforms; but the side to which they have pledged themselves on Monday they forsake on Tuesday under the plea of reconversion. 90 Neither can they carry out any design of their own, if their friends take it in hand to over-persuade them.

If a man of this stamp has painted a picture he can be induced to change the whole key, the central circumstance and the principal figure, at the suggestion of a confident critic who is only a pupil in the art of which he is, at least technically, a master. If he is preaching or lecturing, he thinks more of the people he is addressing than of what he has to say; and, though impelled at times to use the scalping-knife, hopes he doesn't wound. Vehement advocates at times, these men's enthusiasm is merely temporary, and burns itself out by its own energy of expression; and how fierce soever their aspect when

they ruffle their feathers and make believe to fight, one vigorous peck from their opponent proves their anatomy as that of a creature without vertebræ, pulpy, gristly, gelatinous, and limp. All things have their uses and good issues; but what portion of the general good the limp are designed to subserve is one of those mysteries not to be revealed in time nor space.

ESSAYS UPON SOCIAL SUBJECTS BOOK FIRSTBY ELIZA LYNN LINTON

THE ART OF RETICENCE.

Among other classifications we may divide the world into those who live by impulse and the undirected flow of circumstance, and those who map out their lives according to art and a definite design. These last however, are rare; few people having capacity enough to construct any persistent plan of life or to carry it through if even begun—it being so much easier to follow nature than to work by rule and square, and to drift with the stream than to build up even a beaver's dam. Now, in the matter of reticence;—How few people understand this as an art, and how almost entirely it is by the mere chance of temperament whether a person is confidential or reticent—with his heart on his sleeve or not to be got at by a pickaxe—irritatingly silent or contemptibly loquacious. Sometimes indeed we do find one who, like Talleyrand, has mastered the art of an eloquent reticence from alpha to omega, and knows how to conceal everything without showing that he conceals anything; but we find such a person very seldom, and we do not always understand his value when we have him.

92 Any one not a born fool can resolve to keep silence on certain points, but it takes a master-mind to be able to talk, and yet not tell. Silence indeed, self-evident and without disguise, though a safe method, is but a clumsy one, and to be tolerated only in very timid or very young people. "Le silence est le parti plus sûr pour celui qui se défie de soi-même," says Rochefoucauld. So is total abstinence for him who cannot control himself. Yet we do not preach total abstinence as the best order of life for a wise and disciplined person, any more than we would put strong ankles into leg-irons, or forbid a rational man to handle a sword. Besides, silence may be as expressive, as tell-tale even, as speech; and at the best there is no science in shutting one's lips and sitting mute; though indeed too few people have got even so far as this in the art of reticence, but tell everything they know so surely as water flows through a sieve, and are safe just in proportion to their ignorance.

But there is art, the most consummate art, in appearing absolutely frank, yet never telling anything which it is not wished should be known; in being pleasantly chatty and conversational, yet never committing oneself to a statement nor an opinion which might be used against one afterwards—ars celare artem being a true maxim in keeping one's own counsel as well as in other things. It is only after a long acquaintance with this kind of person that you find out he has been substantially reticent throughout, 93 though apparently so frank. Caught by his easy manner, his genial talk, his ready sympathy, you have confided to him not only all that you have of your own, but all that you have of

other people's; and it is only long after, when you reflect quietly, undisturbed by the magnetism of his presence, that you come to the knowledge of how reticent he has been in the midst of his seeming frankness, and how little reciprocity there has been in your confidences together. You know such people for years, and you never really know more of them at the end than you did in the beginning. You cannot lay your finger on a fact that would in any way place them in your power; and though you did not notice it at the time, and do not know how it has been done now, you feel that they have never trusted you, and have all along carefully avoided anything like confidence. But you are at their mercy by your own rashness, and if they do not destroy you it is because they are reticent for you as well as towards you; perhaps because they are good-natured; perhaps because they despise you for your very frankness too much to hurt you; but above all things not because they are unable. How you hate them when you think of the skill with which they took all that was offered to them, yet never let you see they gave back nothing for their own part—rather by the jugglery of manner made you believe that they were giving back as much as they were receiving! Perhaps it was a little ungenerous; but they had the right to argue that if 94 you could not keep your own counsel you would not be likely to keep theirs, and it was only kind at the time to let you hoodwink yourself so that you might not be offended.

In manner genial, frank, conversational, sympathetic—in substance absolutely secret, cautious, never taken off their guard, never seduced into dangerous confidences, as careful for their friends as they are for themselves, and careful even for strangers unknown to them—these people are the salvation as they are the charm of society; never making mischief, and, by their habitual reticence, raising up barriers at which gossip halts and rumour dies. No slander is ever traced to them, and what they know is as though it were not. Yet they do not make the clumsy mistake of letting you see that they are better informed than yourself on certain subjects, and know more about the current scandals of the day than they choose to reveal. On the contrary, they listen to your crude mistakes with a highly edified air, and leave you elated with the idea that you have let them behind the scenes and told them more than they knew before. If only they had spoken, your elation would not have been very long-lived.

Of all personal qualities this art of reticence is the most important and most valuable for a professional man to possess. Lawyer or physician, he must be able to hold all and hear all without betraying by word or look—by injudicious defence no more than by overt treachery—by anger at a malicious accusation 95 no more than by a smile at an egregious mistake. His business is to be reticent, not exculpatory; to maintain silence, not set up a defence nor yet proclaim the truth. To do this well requires a rare combination of good qualities—among which are tact and self-respect in about equal amount—self-command and the power of hitting that fine line which marks off reticence from deception. No man was ever thoroughly successful as either a lawyer or physician

who did not possess this combination; and with it even a modest amount of technical skill can be made to go a long way.

Valuable in society, at home the reticent are so many forms of living death. Eyes have they and see not; ears and hear not; and the faculty of speech seems to have been given them in vain. They go out and they come home, and they tell you nothing of all they have seen. They have heard all sorts of news and seen no end of pleasant things, but they come down to breakfast the next morning as mute as fishes, and if you want it you must dig out your own information bit by bit by sequential, categorical questioning. Not that they are surly nor ill-natured; they are only reticent. They are really disastrous to those who are associated with them, and make the worst partners in the world in business or marriage; for you never know what is going on, nor where you are, and you must be content to walk blindfold if you walk with them. They tell you nothing beyond what they are obliged to tell; take 96 you into no confidence; never consult you; never arrest their own action for your concurrence; and the consequence is that you live with them in the dark, for ever afraid of looming catastrophes, and more like a captive bound to the car of their fortunes than like the coadjutor with a voice in the manner of the driving and the right to assist in the direction of the journey. This is the reticence of temperament, and we see it in children from quite an early age—those children who are trusted by the servants, and are their favourites in consequence, because they tell no tales; but it is a disposition that may become dangerous unless watched, and that is always liable to degenerate into falsehood. For reticence is just on the boundary of deception, and it needs but a very little step to take one over the border.

That obtrusive kind of reticence which parades itself—which makes mysteries and lets you see there are mysteries—which keeps silence and flaunts it in your face as an intentional silence brooding over things you are not worthy to know—that silence which is as loud as words, is one of the most irritating things in the world and can be made one of the most insulting. If words are sharp arrows, this kind of dumbness is paralysis, and all the worse to bear because it puts it out of your power to complain. You cannot bring into court a list of looks and shrugs, nor make it a grievance that a man held his tongue while you raved, and to all appearance kept his temper when you lost yours. Yet all of us who 97 have had any experience that way know that his holding his tongue was the very reason why you raved, and that if he had spoken for his own share the worst of the tempest would have been allayed. This is a common manner of tormenting with reticent people who have a moral twist; and to fling stones at you from behind the shield of silence by which they have sheltered themselves is a pastime that hurts only one of the combatants. Reticence, though at times one of the greatest social virtues we possess, is also at times one of the most disastrous personal conditions.

Half our modern novels turn on the misery brought about by mistaken reticence; and though novelists generally exaggerate the circumstances they deal with, they are not wrong in their facts. If the waters of strife have been let loose because of many words, there have been broken hearts before now because of none. Old proverbs, to be sure, inculcate the value of reticence, and the wisdom of keeping one's own counsel. If speech is silvern, silence is golden, in popular philosophy; and the youth is ever enjoined to be like the wise man, and keep himself free from the peril of words. Yet for all that, next to truth, on which society rests, mutual knowledge is the best working virtue, and a state of reticent distrust is more prudent than noble.

Many people think it a fine thing to live with their most intimate friends as if they would one day become their enemies, and never let even their 98 deepest affections strike root so far down as confidence. They rearrange La Bruyère's famous maxim, 'L'on peut avoir la confiance de quelqu'un sans en avoir le cœur,' and take it quite the contrary way; but perhaps the heart which gives itself, divorced from confidence, is not worth accepting; and reticence where there is love sounds almost a contradiction in terms. Indeed, the certainty of unlimited confidences where there is love is one of the strongest of all the arguments in favour of general reticence. For in nine cases out of ten you tell your secrets and open your heart, not only to your friend, but to your friend's wife, or husband, or lover; and secondhand confidence is rarely held sacred if it can be betrayed with impunity.

By an apparent contradiction, reticent people who tell nothing are often the most charming letter-writers. Full of chit-chat, of descriptions dashed off with a warm and flowing pen, giving all the latest news well authenticated and not scandalous, and breathing just the right amount of affection according to the circumstances of the correspondents—a naturally eloquent person who has cultivated the art of reticence writes letters unequalled for charm of manner. The first impression of them is superb, enchanting, enthralling, like the bouquet of old wine; but, on reconsideration, what have they said? Absolutely nothing. This charming letter, apparently so full of matter, is an answer to a great, good, honest outpour wherein you laid bare that 99 foolish heart of yours and delivered up your soul for anatomical examination; and you looked for a reply based on the same lines. At first delighted, you are soon chilled and depressed by such a return, and you feel that you have made a fool of yourself, and that your correspondent is laughing in his sleeve at your insane propensity to gush. So must it be till that good time comes when man shall have no need to defend himself against his fellows; when confidence shall not bring sorrow nor trust betrayal; and when the art of reticence shall be as obsolete as the art of fence, or the Socratic method.

ESSAYS UPON SOCIAL SUBJECTS BOOK FIRSTBY ELIZA LYNN LINTON

MEN'S FAVOURITES.

We often hear women speak with a certain curious disdain of one of themselves as a 'gentlemen's favourite;' generally adding that gentlemen's favourites are never liked by their own sex, and giving you to understand that they are minxes rather than otherwise, and objectionable in proportion to their attractiveness. They never can understand why they should be so attractive, they say; and hold it as one of the unfathomable mysteries of men's bad taste—the girls to whom no man addresses half a dozen words in the course of the evening being far prettier and nicer than the favourite with whom everybody is talking, and for whom all men are contending. Yet see how utterly they are neglected, while she is surrounded with admirers. But then she is an artful little flirt, they say, who lays herself out to attract, while the others are content to stay quietly in the shade until they are sought. And they speak as if to attract men's admiration was a sin, and not one of the final causes of woman as well as one of her chief social duties.

There is always war between the women who are 101 gentlemen's favourites and those who are not; and if the last dislike the first, the first despise the last, and go out of their way to provoke them; a thing not difficult to do when a woman gives her mind to it. A gentlemen's favourite is generally attacked on the score of her morality, not to speak of her manners, which are pronounced as bad as they can be; while, how pretty soever men may think her, her own sex decry her, and pick her to pieces with such effect that they do not leave her a single charm. She is assumed to be incapable of anything like real earnestness of feeling; of anything like true womanliness of sentiment; to be ignorant of the higher rules of modesty; to be fast or sly, according to her speciality of style; and if you listen to her dissector you will find in time that she has every fault incidental to a frail humanity, while her noblest virtue is in all probability a 'kind of good nature' which does not count for much. In return, the favourite sneers at the wallflower, whom she calls stupid and spiteful, and whom she rejoices to annoy by the excess of her popularity; nothing pleasing her so much as to make herself look worse than she is in the way of men's liking—except it be to carry off the one tup lamb belonging to a wallflower, and brand him as of her own multitudinous herd. The quarrel is a deadly one as regards the combatants, but it has very little effect on the 'ring;' for, notwithstanding the faults and frailties of which they hear so much, the men flock round the one and make her the public 102 favourite of the set. But, as the valid result, probably the prize match of the circle chooses a stupid wallflower for life; and the favourite who has ridiculed the successful prizeholder scores of times, and who would give ten years of her

life to be in her place, has to swallow her confusion as she best can, and accept her discomfiture as if she liked it.

If a men's favourite begins her career unmarried, she most frequently remains unmarried to the end; fulfilling her mission of charming all and fixing none till she comes to the age when her sex has no mission at all. If she is married she has developed after the event; in her nonage having been a shy if observant wallflower, quietly watching the methods which later she has so ably applied, and taking lessons from the very girls who queened it over her with that insolent supremacy which, more than all else, she noted, envied and profited by. If she marries while a favourite and in the full swing of her triumphs, she probably gets pulled up by her husband (unless she is in India, or wherever else women are at a premium and mistresses of the situation), and subsides into the best and most domestic kind of 'brooding hen.' However that may be, marriage, which is the great transforming agent of a woman's character, seldom leaves her on the same lines as before; though sometimes of course the foolish virgin developes into the frisky matron, and the girl who begins life as a men's favourite ends it as a mature siren.

103 There are two kinds of men's favourites—the bright women who amuse them and the sympathetic ones who love them. But these last are of a doubtful, what country people call 'chancy,' kind; women who show their feelings too openly, who fall in love too seriously, or perhaps unasked altogether, being more likely to irritate and repel than to charm. But the bright, animated women who know how to talk and do not preach; who say innocent things in an audacious way and audacious things in an innocent way; who are clever without pedantry; frank without impudence; quick to follow a lead when shown them; and who know the difference between badinage and earnestness, flirting and serious intentions—these are the women who are liked by men and whose social success in no wise depends on their beauty.

Of one thing the clever woman who wants to be a men's favourite must always be careful—to keep that half step in the rear which alone reconciles men to her superiority of wit. She must not shine so much by her own light as by contact with theirs; and her most brilliant sallies ought to convey the impression of being struck out by them rather than of being elaborated by herself alone—suggested by what had gone before, if improved on for their advantage. Else she offends masculine self-love, never slow to take fire, and gains an element of hardness and self-assertion incompatible with her character of favourite. Not that men dislike all kinds of self-assertion. The irrepressible little woman with her 104 trim waist and jaunty air, pert, pretty, defiant, who laughs in the face of the burly policeman able to crush her between his finger and thumb, and to whom ropes and barriers are things to be skipped over or dived under, as the case may

be—she who is all cackle and self-assertion like a little bantam, is also most frequently a men's favourite, and encouraged in her saucy forwardness.

Then there is the graceful, fragile, swan-necked woman, who, a generation ago, would have been one of the Della Cruscan school, all poetry and music and fine feelings, and of a delicacy so refined that broad-browed Nature herself had to be veiled and toned down to the subdued key proper for the graceful creature to accept—but nowadays this graceful creature plunges boldly into the midst of the most tremendous realism, is an ardent advocate for woman's rights, and perhaps goes out 'on the rampage,' on platforms and the like to advocate doctrines as little in harmony with the kind of being she is as would be a diet of horseflesh and brandy. She gets her following; and men who do not agree with her delight to set her off on her favourite topics, just as women like to see their little girls play with their dolls and repeat to the harmless dummy the experiences which have been real to themselves.

These two classes of self-assertion are mere plays which amuse men; but when it comes to a reality, and is no longer a play—when a man is made to feel small, useless, insignificant by the side of a woman—he 105 meets them with something he neither likes nor easily forgives; and if such a woman had the beauty of Venus, she would not be a men's favourite of the right sort; though some of course would admire her and do their best to spoil and make a fool of her.

A men's favourite of the right sort must, among other things, be well up in the accidence of flirting, and know how to take it at exactly its proper value. She must be able to accept broad compliments, or more subtle love-making, without either too serious an acceptance or too grave a deprecation. This is a great art, and one that, more than any other, puts men at their ease and sets the machinery of pleasant intercourse in harmonious action. Never to show whether she is really hit or not; never to give a fop occasion for a boast nor an enemy room for a pitying sneer; to take everything in good part and to be as quick in giving as in receiving; never to be off her guard; never to throw away her arms; to conceal any number of foxes that may be gnawing at her beneath her cloak—this kind of flirting, in which most men's favourites are adepts, is an art that reaches almost the dimensions of a science. And it is just that in which your very intense, your very earnest and sincere, women are utter failures. They know nothing of badinage, but take everything au grand sérieux; and when you mean to be simply playful and complimentary, imagine you in tragic earnest, and think themselves obliged to frown down a compliment as a liberty; or else they accept it with 106 a passionate pleasure that shows how deeply it has struck.

These intense and very sincere women are not as a rule men's favourites, unless they have other qualities of such a pleasant and seductive kind as to excuse the enormous

blunder they make of wearing their hearts on their sleeves for drawing-room daws to peck at, and the still greater blunder of confounding love-making with love. They may be, and if they have nice manners and are good-tempered they probably are, of the race of popular women; that is, liked by both men and women; but they are not men's favourites par excellence, who moreover are never liked by women at all.

Women are quite right in one thing, hard as it seems to say it:—men's favourites, whom women dislike and distrust, are not usually good for much morally. They are often false, insincere, superficial, and possibly with a very low aim in life. And the men know all this, but forgive it for the sake of the pleasantness and charm which is the grace that shadows, or rather brightens, all the rest; having oftentimes indeed a half-contemptuous tolerance for the sins of their favourites as not expecting anything better from them. Grant that they are false, that they sail perilously near the wind, are shifty and untrustworthy—what of that? They are not favourites because of their good qualities, only because of their pleasant ones; because of that subtle je ne sais quoi of old writers which stands one in 107 such good stead when one is at a loss for an analysis, and which is the only term that expresses the strong yet indefinite charm which certain women possess for men. It is not beauty; it is not necessarily cleverness taken in the sense of education, though it must be a keenness if not depth of intellect, and smartness if not the power of reasoning; it certainly is not goodness; it is not always youth, nor yet warmth of feeling—though all these things come in as characteristics in their turn; but it is companionship and the power of amusing. Still, what is it that creates this power, this companionship? A smart, pert, flippant little minx, as women call her, with a shrill voice and a saucy air, may be the men's favourite of one set; a refined, graceful woman, speaking softly, and with pleading eyes, may be the favourite of another; a third may be a blunt, off-handed young person, given to speaking her mind so that there shall be no mistake; a fourth may be a silent and seemingly a shy woman, fond of sitting out in retired places, and with a reputation for flirting of a quiet kind that sets the woman's fingers tingling.

There is no settled rule anyhow, and all kinds have their special sphere of shining, according to circumstances. But whatever they may be, they are useful in their generation and valuable for such work as they have to do. Society is a miserably dull affair to men when there are no favourites of any sort; where the womanhood in the room is of the 108 kind that herds together as if for protection, and looks askance over its shoulder at the wolves in coats and beards who prowl about the sheepfold of petticoats; where conversation is monosyllabic in form and restricted in substance; where pleasant men who talk are considered dangerous, and fascinating women who answer immoral; where the matrons are grim and the maidens still in the bread-and-butter stage of existence; and where young wives take matrimonial fidelity to mean

making themselves disagreeable to every man but their husband, on the plea that one never knows what may happen, and that you cannot go on with what you never begin.

ESSAYS UPON SOCIAL SUBJECTS BOOK FIRSTBY ELIZA LYNN LINTON

WOMANLINESS.

There are certain words, suggestive rather than descriptive, the value of which lies in their very vagueness and elasticity of interpretation, by which each mind can write its own commentary, each imagination sketch out its own illustration. And one of these is Womanliness; a word infinitely more subtle in meaning, with more possibilities of definition, more light and shade, more facets, more phases, than the corresponding word manliness. This indeed must necessarily be so, since the character of women is so much more varied in colour and more delicate in its many shades than that of men.

We call it womanliness when a lady of refinement and culture overcomes the natural shrinking of sense, and voluntarily enters into the circumstances of sickness and poverty, that she may help the suffering in their hour of need; when she can bravely go through some of the most shocking experiences of humanity for the sake of the higher law of charity; and we call it womanliness when she removes from herself every suspicion of grossness, coarseness, or ugliness, and makes her life as dainty as a picture, as lovely as 110 a poem. She is womanly when she asserts her own dignity; womanly when her highest pride is the sweetest humility, the tenderest self-suppression; womanly when she protects the weaker; womanly when she submits to the stronger. To bear in silence and to act with vigour; to come to the front on some occasions, to efface herself on others, are alike the characteristics of true womanliness; as is also the power to be at once practical and æsthetic, the careful worker-out of minute details and the upholder of a sublime idealism—the house-mistress dispensing bread and the priestess serving in the temple. In fact, it is a very Proteus of a word, and means many things by turns; but it never means anything but what is sweet, tender, gracious and beautiful. Yet, protean as it is in form, its substance has hitherto been considered simple enough, and its limits have been very exactly defined; and we used to think we knew to a shade what was womanly and what was unwomanly—where, for instance, the nobleness of dignity ended and the hardness of self-assertion began; while no one could mistake the heroic sacrifice of self for the indifference to pain and the grossness belonging to a coarse nature:—which last is as essentially unwomanly as the first is one of the finest manifestations of true womanliness. But if this exactness of interpretation belonged to past times, the utmost confusion prevails at present; and one of the points on which society is now at issue in all directions is just this very question—What is essentially unwomanly? and, what are 111 the only rightful functions of true womanliness? Men and tradition say one thing, certain women say another thing; and if what these women say is to become the rule, society will have to be reconstructed ab initio, and a new order of

human life must begin. We have no objection to this, provided the new order is better than the old, and the modern phase of womanhood more beautiful, more useful to the community at large, more elevating to general morality than was the ancient. But the whole matter hangs on this proviso; and until it can be shown for certain that the latter phase is to be undeniably the better we will hold by the former.

There are certain old—superstitions must we call them?—in our ideas of women, with which we should be loth to part. For instance, the infinite importance of a mother's influence over her children, and the joy that she herself took in their companionship—the pleasure that it was to her to hold a baby in her arms—her delight and maternal pride in the beauty, the innocence, the quaint ways, the odd remarks, the half-embarrassing questions, the first faint dawnings of reason and individuality, of the little creatures to whom she had given life and who were part of her very being—that pleasure and maternal pride were among the characteristics we used to ascribe to womanliness; as was also the mother's power of forgetting herself for her children, of merging herself in them as they grew older, and finding her own best happiness in theirs. But 112 among the advanced women who despise the tame teachings of what was once meant by womanliness, maternity is considered a bore rather than a blessing; the children are shunted to the side when they come; and ignorant undisciplined nurses are supposed to do well for wages what mothers will not do for love.

Also we held it as womanliness when women resolutely refused to admit into their presence, to discuss or hear discussed before them, impure subjects, or even doubtful ones; when they kept the standard of delicacy, of purity, of modesty, at a high level, and made men respect, even if they could not imitate. Now the running between them and men whose delicacy has been rubbed off long ago by the intimate contact of coarse life is very close; and some of them go even beyond those men whose lives have been of a quiet and unexperimental kind. Nothing indeed, is so startling to a man who has not lived in personal and social familiarity with certain subjects, and who has retained the old chivalrous superstitions about the modesty and innocent ignorance of women, as the easy, unembarrassed coolness with which his fair neighbour at a dinner-table will dash off into thorny paths, managing between the soup and the grapes to run through the whole gamut of improper subjects.

It was also an old notion that rest and quiet and peace were natural characteristics of womanliness; and that life had been not unfairly apportioned between the sexes, each having its own distinctive duties as well as virtues, its own burdens as well as 113 its own pleasures. Man was to go out and do battle with many enemies; he was to fight with many powers; to struggle for place, for existence, for natural rights; to give and take hard blows; to lose perhaps this good impulse or that noble quality in the fray—the battle-field of life not being that wherein the highest virtues take root and grow. But he

had always a home where was one whose sweeter nature brought him back to his better self; a place whence the din of battle was shut out; where he had time for rest and spiritual reparation; where a woman's love and gentleness and tender thought and unselfish care helped and refreshed him, and made him feel that the prize was worth the struggle, that the home was worth the fight to keep it. And surely it was not asking too much of women that they should be beautiful and tender to the men whose whole life out of doors was one of work for them—of vigorous toil that they might be kept in safety and luxury. But to the advanced woman it seems so; consequently the home as a place of rest for the man is becoming daily more rare. Soon, it seems to us, there will be no such thing as the old-fashioned home left in England. Women are swarming out at all doors; running hither and thither among the men; clamouring for arms that they may enter into the fray with them; anxious to lay aside their tenderness, their modesty, their womanliness, that they may become hard and fierce and self-asserting like them; thinking it a far 114 higher thing to leave the home and the family to take care of themselves, or under the care of some incompetent hireling, while they enter on the manly professions and make themselves the rivals of their husbands and brothers.

Once it was considered an essential of womanliness that a woman should be a good house-mistress, a judicious dispenser of the income, a careful guide to her servants, a clever manager generally. Now practical housekeeping is a degradation; and the free soul which disdains the details of housekeeping yearns for the intellectual employment of an actuary, of a law clerk, of a banker's clerk. Making pills is held to be a nobler employment than making puddings; while, to distinguish between the merits of Egyptians and Mexicans, the Turkish loan and the Spanish, is considered a greater exercise of mind than to know fresh salmon from stale and how to lay in household stores with judgment. But the last is just as important as the first, and even more so; for the occasional pill, however valuable, is not so valuable as the daily pudding, and not all the accumulations made by lucky speculation are of any use if the house-bag which holds them has a hole in it.

Once women thought it no ill compliment that they should be considered the depositaries of the highest moral sentiments. If they were not held the wiser nor the more logical of the two sections of the human race, they were held the more religious, 115 the more angelic, the better taught of God, and the nearer to the way of grace. Now they repudiate the assumption as an insult, and call that the sign of their humiliation which was once their distinguishing glory. They do not want to be patient, self-sacrifice is only a euphemism for slavish submission to manly tyranny; the quiet peace of home is miserable monotony; and though they have not come to the length of renouncing the Christian virtues theoretically, their theory makes but weak practice, and the womanliness integral to Christianity is by no means the rule of life of modern womanhood. But the oddest part of the present odd state of things is the curious

blindness of women to what is most beautiful in themselves. Granting even that the world has turned so far upside down that the one sex does not care to please the other, still, there is a good of itself in beauty, which some of our modern women seem to overlook. And of all kinds of beauty that which is included in what we mean by womanliness is the greatest and the most beautiful.

A womanly woman has neither vanity nor hardness. She may be pretty—most likely she is—and she may know it; for, not being a fool, she cannot help seeing it when she looks at herself in the glass; but knowing the fact is not being conscious of the possession, and a pretty woman, if of the right ring, is not vain, though she prizes her beauty as she ought. And she is as little hard as vain. Her soul is not given up to ribbons, but neither is she indifferent to 116 externals, dress among them. She knows that part of her natural mission is to please and be charming, and she knows that dress sets her off, and that men feel more enthusiastically towards her when she is looking fresh and pretty than when she is a dowdy and a fright. And, being womanly, she likes the admiration of men, and thinks their love a better thing than their indifference. If she likes men she loves children, and never shunts them as nuisances, nor frets when forced to have them about her. She knows that she was designed by the needs of the race and the law of nature to be a mother; sent into the world for that purpose mainly; and she knows that rational maternity means more than simply giving life and then leaving it to others to preserve it. She has no newfangled notions about the animal character of motherhood, nor about the degrading character of housekeeping. On the contrary, she thinks a populous and happy nursery one of the greatest blessings of her state; and she puts her pride in the perfect ordering, the exquisite arrangements, the comfort, thoughtfulness and beauty of her house. She is not above her métier as a woman; and she does not want to ape the manliness she can never possess.

She has always been taught that, as there are certain manly virtues, so are there certain feminine ones; and that she is the most womanly among women who has those virtues in greatest abundance and in the highest perfection. She has taken it to 117 heart that patience, self-sacrifice, tenderness, quietness, with some others, of which modesty is one, are the virtues more especially feminine; just as courage, justice, fortitude, and the like, belong to men.

Passionate ambition, virile energy, the love of strong excitement, self-assertion, fierceness, an undisciplined temper, are all qualities which detract from her ideal of womanliness, and which make her less beautiful than she was meant to be. Consequently she has cultivated all the meek and tender affections, all the unselfishness and thought for others which have hitherto been the distinctive property of her sex, by the exercise of which they have done their best work and earned their highest place. She thinks it no degradation that she should take pains to please, to soothe, to comfort the

man who, all day long, has been doing irksome work that her home may be beautiful and her life at ease. She does not think it incumbent on her, as a woman of spirit, to fly out at an impatient word; to answer back a momentary irritation with defiance; to give back a Roland to his Oliver. Her womanliness inclines her to loving forbearance, to patience under difficulties, to unwearied cheerfulness under such portion of the inevitable burden as may have been laid on her. She does not hold herself predestined by nature to receive only the best of everything, and deem herself affronted where her own especial cross is bound on her shoulders. Rather, she understands that she too must take the rough with the smooth; but that, as 118 her husband's way in life is rougher than hers, his trials are greater, his burden is heavier, it is her duty—and her privilege—to help him all she can with her tenderness and her love; and to give back to him at home, if in a different form, some of the care he has expended while abroad to make her path smooth.

In a word, the womanly woman whom we all once loved and in whom we have still a kind of traditional belief, is she who regards the wishes of men as of some weight in female action; who holds to love rather than opposition; to reverence, not defiance; who takes more pride in the husband's fame than in her own; who glories in the protection of his name, and in her state as wife; who feels the honour given to her as wife and matron far dearer than any she may earn herself by personal prowess; and who believes in her consecration as a helpmeet for man, not in a rivalry which a few generations will ripen into a coarse and bitter enmity.

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SOMETHING TO WORRY.

A humane condescension to instinct has lately supplied ladies' lapdogs with an ingenious instrument of mock torture, in the shape of an india-rubber head which hops about the room on the smallest persuasion, and squeaks shrilly when caught and worried. The animal has thus the pleasure of mauling something which seems to suffer from the process; while in reality it hurts nothing, but expends its tormenting energy on a quite unfeeling creature, whose raison d'être it is to be worried and made to squeak. It would be well for some of us if those people who must have something to worry would be content with a creature analogous to the lapdog's india-rubber head. It would do just as well for them, and it would save us who feel a great deal of real pain. Tippoo Sahib was a wise man when he caused his automaton to be made, in which a tiger seemed to be tearing at the prostrate figure of a wooden European, and the group gave out mingled growls and groans at the turning of a handle in its side. It might have been a dismal fancy perhaps; but the fancy was better than the reality, and did quite as well for the 120 purpose, which was that the monarch should keep himself in good humour by the charm of something to worry.

There are few pains in life greater than the companionship of one of those ill-conditioned people who must have something to worry, and who are only happy with a grievance. No fortune, no fair possessions of love nor beauty, nor what one would think must be the sources of intense happiness, are spells to exorcise the worrying spirit—opiates to allay the worrying fever. If in the midst of all they have to make them blessed among the sons of men, there hops the squeaking ball, in an instant every good thing belonging to them is forgotten, and there is nothing in heaven and earth but that one obtruding grievance, that one intolerable annoyance. Nothing is too small for them to make into a gigantic evil and be offended at accordingly. They will not endure with patience the minutest, nor the most inevitable, of the crosses of life—things which every one has to bear alike; which no one can help; and concerning which the only wisdom is to meet them with cheerfulness, tiding over the bad time as quietly as possible till things take a turn. Not they. They know the luxury of having something to complain of; and they like to feel wronged. The wind is in the east and they are personally injured; the rain has come on a pleasure day, or has not come in a seed-sowing week, and they fret grimly and make every one about them uncomfortable, as if the weather 121 were a thing to be arranged at will, and a disappointing day were the result of wilful mismanagement. Life is a burden to them and all about them because the climate is uncertain and the elements are out of human control. They make themselves the most wretched of martyrs

too, if they are in a country they do not like; and they never do like the country they are in. If down in a valley, they are suffocated; if in the plains or on a table-land, they hate monotony and long for undulations; if they are in a wooded district, they dread the damp and worry about the autumn exhalations; if on a moor, who can live without green hills and hedgerow birds? They are sorely exercised concerning clay and gravel; and they find as many differences in the London climate within a half-hour's walk as those who do not worry would find between St. Andrews and Mentone. But they are no nearer the right thing wherever they go; and the people belonging to them may as well bear the worry at Brompton as at Hampstead, in Cumberland as in Cornwall, and so save both trouble and expense.

These worrying folk never let a thing alone. If they have once found a victim they keep him; crueller in this than cats and tigers which play with their prey only for a time, but finally give the coup de grâce and devour it, bones and all. But worrying folk never have done with their prey, be it person or thing, and have an art of persistence—a way of establishing a raw—that drives their poor victims 122 into temporary insanity. This persistency indeed, and the total indifference to the maddening effect they produce, are the oddest parts of the performance. They begin again for the twentieth time, just where they left off; as fresh as if they had not done it all before, and as eager as if you did not know exactly what was coming. And it makes no kind of difference to them that their worrying has no effect, and that things go on exactly as before—exactly as they would have done had there been no fuss about them at all.

Granting however, that the old proverb about constant dropping and inevitable wearing is fulfilled, and that worrying accomplishes its end, it had better have been let alone; for no one was ever yet worried into compliance with an uncongenial or abandonment of a favourite habit, who did not make the worrier wish more than once that he had let matters remain where he had found them. Imbued with the unfortunate belief that all things and persons are to be ordered to their liking, the worriers think themselves justified in flying at the throat of everything they dislike, and in making their dislikes peculiar grievances. The natural inclination of boys to tear their clothes and begrime their hands, to climb up ladders at the peril of their necks, and to make themselves personally unpleasant to every sense, is a burden laid specially on them, if they chance to be the parents of vigorous and robust youth. The cares of their family are greater than the cares of any 123 other family; and no one understands what they go through, though every one is told pretty liberally. Hint at the sufferings of others, and they think you unfeeling and unsympathetic; try to cheer them, and you affront them; unless you would offend them for life, you must listen patiently to the repetition of their miseries continually twanged on one string, and feign the commiseration you cannot feel.

It is impossible for these people to go through life in amity with all men. They may be very good Christians theoretically; most likely they are; according to the law of compensation by which theory and practice so seldom go together; but the elementary doctrines of peace and goodwill are beyond their power of translation into deeds. They have always some one who is Mordecai to them; some one connected with them, whose habits, nature, whose very being is a decided offence, and whom therefore they worry without mercy. You never know these people to be without a grievance. It may be husband or brother, friend or servant, as it happens; but there is sure to be some one whose existence puts them out of tune, and on whom therefore they revenge the discord by continual worrying. Yet they would be miserable if their grievance were withdrawn, leaving them for the time without a victim. It would be only for a time indeed; for the exit of one would be the signal for the entrance of another. The millennium to these people would be intolerable dullness; and if they were translated into heaven itself, they 124 would of a certainty travesty the child's desire, and ask for a little devil to worry, if not to play with. Women are sad sinners in this way. Men who stay at home and potter about get like them, but women, who are naturally nervous, and whose lives are spent in small things, are generally more worrying than men; at least in daily life and at home. Indeed, the woman who is more cheerful and hopeful than easily depressed, and who does not worry any one, is the exception rather than the rule, and to be prized as one would prize any other rarity.

Children come in for a good deal of domestic worrying; and under pretence of good management and careful education are used as mamma's squeaking heads, which lie ever handy for a chase. Any one who has been in a family where the mother is of a naturally worrying temper, and where a child has a peculiarity, can appreciate to the full what the propensity is. With substantial love at heart, the mother leads the wretched little creature a life worse than that of the typical dog; and makes of its peculiarity, whatever that may be, a personal offence which she is justified in resenting and never leaving alone. And if it be so with her children, much more is it with her husband, for whom her tenderness is naturally less. Though concerning him she evidently does not know her own mind; for when she has worried into his grave the man who all his life was such a trial to her, such a cross, perhaps such a brute, she puts on widow's weeds of the 125 deepest hue, and worries her sons and daughters with her uncomfortable reaction in favour of 'poor papa,' whose virtues come to the front with a bound. Or may be she continues the old song in a different key, substituting compassion and a sublime forgiveness in place of her former annoyance, but harping all the same on the old strain and rasping the old sores.

Infelicitous at home, these worrying people are almost more than flesh and blood can bear as travelling companions abroad. Always sure that the train is going to start and leave them behind; that their landlord is a robber and in league with brigands; that they

will be dashed down the precipice which tens of thousands have passed in safety before; worrying about the luggage; and where is that trunk? and are you sure you saw the portmanteau safe? and have you the keys? and the custom-house officers will find that bottle of eau-de-cologne and charge both fine and duty for it; and have you changed the money? and are you sure you have enough? and what are the fares? and you have been cheated; and what a bill for only one breakfast and one night!—and so on.

The person who undertakes a journey with constitutional worriers ought to have nerves of iron and a head of ice. They will leave nothing to the care of ordinary rule, let nothing go by faith. The luggage is always being lost, according to them; accidents are certain to happen half a dozen times a 126 day; and the beds are invariably damp. Their mosquito bites are worse than any other person's; and no one is plagued with small beasts as they are. They worry all through the journey, till you wish yourself dead twenty times at least before the month is out; and when they come home, they tell their friends they would have enjoyed themselves immensely had they been allowed, but they were so much annoyed and worried they lost half the pleasure of the trip. So it will be to the end of time. As children, fretful; as boys and girls, impatient and ill-tempered; as men and women, worrying, interfering, restless; as old people, peevish and exacting—they will die as they have lived; and the world about them will draw a deep breath of relief when the day of their departure comes, and will feel their atmosphere so much the lighter for their loss. Poor creatures! They are conscious of not being loved as they love, and as perhaps theoretically, they deserve to be loved; but it would be impossible, even by a surgical operation, to make them understand the reason why; and that it is their own habit of incessantly worrying which has chilled the hearts of their friends, and made them such a burden to others that their removal is a release and their absence the promise of a life of peace.

127

SWEETS OF MARRIED LIFE.

Marriage, which most girls consider the sole aim of their existence and the end of all their anxieties, is often the beginning of a set of troubles which none among them expect, and which, when they come, very few accept with the dignity of patience or the reasonableness of common sense. Hitherto the man has been the suitor, the wooer. It has been his métier to make love; to utter extravagant professions; to talk poetry and romance of an eminently unwearable kind; and to swear that feelings, which by the very nature of things it is impossible to maintain at their present state of fever heat, will be as lasting as life itself and never know subsidence nor diminution. And girls believe all that their lovers tell them. They believe in the absorption of the man's whole life in the love which at the most cannot be more than a part of his life; they believe that things will go

on for ever as they have begun, and that the fire and fervour of passion will never cool down to the more manageable warmth of friendship. And in this belief of theirs lies the rock on which not a few make such pitiful shipwreck of their married happiness. 128 They expect their husbands to remain always lovers. Not lovers only in the best sense, which of course all happy husbands are to the end of time, but lovers as in the old fond, foolish, courting days. They expect a continuance of the romance, the poetry, the exaggeration, the petits soins, the microscopic attentions, the absorption of thought and interest, the centralization of his happiness in her society, just as in the days when she was still to be won, or, a little later, when, being won, she was new in the wearing. And as we said before, a wife's first trial, and her greatest, is when her husband begins to leave off this kind of fervid love-making and settles down into the tranquil friend.

As with children so is it in the nature of most women to require continual assurances. Very few believe in a love which is not frequently expressed; while the ability to trust in the vital warmth of an affection that has lost its early feverishness is the mark of a higher wisdom than most of them possess. To make them thoroughly happy a man must be always at their feet; and they are jealous of everything—even of his work—that takes him away from them, or gives him occasion for thought and interest outside themselves. They are rarely able to rise to the height of married friendship; and if they belong to a reticent and quiet-going man—a man who says 'I love you' once for all, and then contents himself with living a life of loyalty and kindness and not talking about 129 it—they fret at what they call his coldness, and feel themselves shorn of half their glory and more than half their dues. They refuse to believe in that which is not daily repeated. They want the incense of flattery, the excitement of love-making; and if these desires are not ministered to by their husbands, the danger is that they will get some one else to 'understand' them and feed the sentimentality which dies of inanition in the quiet serenity of home. Moonlights; a bouquet of the earliest flowers carefully arranged and tenderly presented; the changing lights on the mountain tops; the exquisite song of the nightingale at two o'clock in the morning; all the rest of those vague and suggestive delights which once made the meeting-places of souls, and furnished occasion for delicious ravings, become by time and use and the wearing realities of business and the crowding pressure of anxieties, puerile and annoying to the ordinary Englishman, who is not a poet by nature. When all the world was young by reason of his own youth, and the fever of the love-making time was on him, he was quite as romantic as his wife. But now he is sobering down; life is fast becoming a very prosaic thing to him; work is taking the place of pleasure, ambition of romance; he pooh-poohs her fond remembrances of bygone follies, and prefers his pipe in the warm library to a station by the open window, watching the sunset because it looks as it did on that evening, and shivering with incipient catarrh. 130 All this is very dreadful to her; women, unfortunately for themselves, remaining young and keeping hold much longer than do men.

The first defection of this kind is a pang the young wife never forgets. But she has many more and yet more bitter ones, when the defection takes a personal shape, and some pretty little attention is carelessly received without its due reward of loving thanks. Perhaps some usual form of caress is omitted in the hurry of the morning's work; or some gloomy anticipation of professional trouble makes him oblivious of her presence; or, fretted by her importunate attentions, he buries himself in a book, more to escape being spoken to than for the book's own merits.

Many a woman has gone into her own room and had a 'good cry' because her husband called her by her baptismal name, and not by some absurd nickname invented in the days of their folly; or because, pressed for time, he hurried out of the house without going through the established formula of leave-taking. The lover has merged in the husband; security has taken the place of wooing; and the woman does not take kindly to the transformation. Sometimes she plays a dangerous game, and tries what flirting with other men will do. If her scheme does not answer, and her husband is not made jealous, she is revolted, and holds herself that hardly-used being, a neglected wife. She cannot accept as a compliment the quiet trust which certain cool-headed men of a loyal kind 131 place in their wives; and her husband's tolerance of her flirting manner—which he takes to be manner only, with no evil in it, and with which, though he may not especially like it, he does not interfere—seems to her indifference rather than tolerance. Yet the confidence implied in this forbearance is in point of fact a compliment worth all the pretty nothings ever invented; though this hearty faith is just the thing which annoys her, and which she stigmatizes as neglect. If she were to go far enough she would find out her mistake. But by that time she would have gone too far to profit by her experience.

Nothing is more annoying than that display of affection which some husbands and wives show to each other in society. That familiarity of touch, those half-concealed caresses, those absurd names, that prodigality of endearing epithets, that devoted attention which they flaunt in the face of the public as a kind of challenge to the world at large to come and admire their happiness, is always noticed and laughed at; and sometimes more than laughed at. Yet to some women this parade of love is the very essence of married happiness and part of their dearest privileges. They believe themselves admired and envied when they are ridiculed and scoffed at; and they think their husbands are models for other men to copy when they are taken as examples for all to avoid.

Men who have any real manliness however, do not give in to this kind of thing; though there are 132 some, as effeminate and gushing as women themselves, who like this sloppy effusiveness of love and carry it on into quite old age, fondling the ancient grandmother with grey hair as lavishly as they had fondled the youthful bride, and seeing no want of harmony in calling a withered old dame of sixty and upwards by the

pet names by which they had called her when she was a slip of a girl of eighteen. The continuance of love from youth to old age is very lovely, very cheering; but even 'John Anderson my Jo' would lose its pathos if Mrs. Anderson had ignored the difference between the raven locks and the snowy brow.

All that excess of flattering and petting of which women are so fond becomes a bore to a man if required as part of the daily habit of life. Out in the world as he is, harassed by anxieties of which she knows nothing, home is emphatically his place of rest—where his wife is his friend who knows his mind; where he may be himself without the fear of offending, and relax the strain that must be kept up out of doors; where he may feel himself safe, understood, at ease. And some women, and these by no means the coldest nor the least loving, are wise enough to understand this need of rest in the man's harder life, and, accepting the quiet of security as part of the conditions of marriage, content themselves with the undemonstrative love into which the fever of passion has subsided. Others fret over it, and make themselves and their husbands wretched because they 133 cannot believe in that which is not for ever paraded before their eyes.

Yet what kind of home is it for the man when he has to walk as if on egg-shells, every moment afraid of wounding the susceptibilities of a woman who will take nothing on trust, and who has to be continually assured that he still loves her, before she will believe that to-day is as yesterday? Of one thing she may be certain; no wife who understands what is the best kind of marriage demands these continual attentions, which, voluntary offerings of the lover, become enforced tribute from the husband. She knows that as a wife, whom it is not necessary to court nor flatter, she has a nobler place than that which is expressed by the attentions paid to a mistress.

Wifehood, like all assured conditions, does not need to be buttressed up; but a less certain position must be supported from the outside, and an insecure self-respect, an uncertain holding, must be perpetually strengthened and reassured. Women who cannot live happily without being made love to are more like mistresses than wives, and come but badly off in the great struggles of life and the cruel handling of time. Placing all their happiness in things which cannot continue, they let slip that which lies in their hands; and in their desire to retain the romantic position of lovers lose the sweet security of wives. Perhaps, if they had higher aims in life than those with which they make shift to satisfy themselves, they would not let themselves sink to the level of 134 this folly, and would understand better than they do now the worth of realities as contrasted with appearances. And yet we cannot but pity the poor, weak, craving souls who long so pitifully for the freshness of the morning to continue far into the day and evening—who cling so tenaciously to the fleeting romance of youth. They are taken by the glitter of things—love-making among the rest; and the man who is showiest in his affection, who can express it with most colour, and paint it, so to speak, with the

minutest touches, is the man whose love seems to them the most trustworthy and the most intense. They make the mistake of confounding this show with the substance, of trusting to pictorial expression rather than to solid facts. And they make that other mistake of cloying their husbands with half-childish caresses which were all very well in the early days, but which become tiresome as time goes on and the gravity of life deepens. And then, when the man either quietly keeps them off or more brusquely repels them, they are hurt and miserable, and think the whole happiness of their lives is dead, and all that makes marriage beautiful at an end.

What is to be done to balance things evenly in this unequal world of sex? What indeed, is to be done at any time to reconcile strength with weakness, and to give each its due? One thing at least is sure. The more thoroughly women learn the true nature of men, the fewer mistakes they will make and the less unhappiness they will create for themselves; and the 135 more patient men are with the hysterical excitability, the restless craving, which nature, for some purpose at present unknown, has made the special temperament of women, the fewer femmes incomprises there will be in married homes and the larger the chance of married happiness. All one's theories of domestic life come down at last to the give-and-take system, to bearing and forbearing, and meeting half way idiosyncrasies which one does not personally share.

ESSAYS UPON SOCIAL SUBJECTS BOOK FIRSTBY ELIZA LYNN LINTON

SOCIAL NOMADS.

As there are wandering tribes which neither build houses nor pitch their tents in one place, so there are certain social nomads who never seem to have a home of their own, and who do not make one for themselves by remaining long in any other person's. They are always moving about and are to be met everywhere; at all sea-side places; at all show places; in Switzerland, France, Italy and Germany; where they live chiefly in pensions at moderate charges, or in meagre lodgings affiliated to a populous table d'hôte much frequented by the English. For one characteristic of social nomads is the strange way in which they congregate together, expatiating on the delights of life abroad, while seeing nothing but the outside of things from the centre of a dense Britannic circle.

Another characteristic is their chronic state of impecuniosity, and the desire of looking like the best on a fixed income of slender dimensions. Hence they are obliged to organize their expenditure on a very narrow basis, and therefore live in boarding-houses, pensions, or wherever good-sized rooms, a sufficient table, and a constant current of society are 137 to be had at small individual cost. As they are people who travel much, they can speak two or three languages, but only as those who have learnt by ear and not by book. They know nothing of foreign literature, and but little of their own, save novels and the class which goes by the name of 'light.' Indeed all the reading they accomplish is confined to newspapers, magazines and novels. But at home, and among those who have not been to Berlin, who have never seen Venice, and to whom Paris is a dream still to be realized, they assume an intimate acquaintance with both the literature and the politics of the Continent—especially the politics—and laugh at the English press for its blindness and onesidedness. They happen to know beyond all doubt how this Correspondent was bought over with so much money down; how that one is in the toils of such or such a Minister's wife; why a third got his appointment; how a fourth keeps his; and they could, if they chose, give you chapter and verse for all they say.

If they chance to have been in India some twenty or thirty years ago, they will tell you why the Mutiny took place, and how the change of Government works; and they can put their fingers on all the sore places of the Empire, beginning with the distribution of patronage and ending with the deficiency of revenue, as aptly as if they were on the spot and had the confidence of the ruling officials. But in spite of these little foibles they are amusing 138 companions as a rule, if shallow and radically ill-informed; and as it is for their own interest to be good company, they have cultivated the art of conversation to the highest pitch of which they are capable, and can entertain if not instruct. When they

aim at instruction indeed, they are pretty sure to miss the mark; and the social nomad who lays down the law on foreign statesmen and politics, and who speaks from personal knowledge, is just the one authority not to be accepted.

Always living in public, yet having to fight, each for his own hand, the manners of social nomads in pensions are generally a strange mixture of suavity and selfishness; and the small intrigues and crafty stratagems going on among them for the possession of the favourite seat in the drawing-room, the special attention of the head-waiter at table, the earliest attendance of the housemaid in the morning, is in strange contrast with the ready smiles, the personal flatteries, the affectation of sympathetic interest kept for show. But every social nomad knows how to appraise this show at its just value, and can weigh it in the balance to a grain. He does not much prize it; for he knows one characteristic of these communities to be that everybody speaks against everybody else, and that all concur in speaking against the management.

Still, life seems to go easily enough among them. They are all well-dressed and for the most part have their tempers under control. Some of the women 139 play well, and some sing prettily. There are always to be found a sufficient number of the middle-aged of either sex to make up a whist-table, where the game is sound and sometimes brilliant; and there are sure to be men who play billiards creditably and with a crisp, clean stroke worth looking at. And there are very often lively women who make amusement for the rest. But these are smartly handled behind backs, though they are petted in public and undeniably useful to the society at large.

The nomadic widow is by some odd fatality generally the widow of an officer, naval or military, to whose rank she attaches an almost superstitious value, thinking that when she can announce herself as the relict of a major or an admiral she has given an unanswerable guarantee and smoothed away all difficulties. She may have many daughters, but more probably she has only one;—for where olive-branches abound nomadism is more expensive than housekeeping, and to live in one's own house is less costly than to live in a boarding-house. But of this one daughter the nomadic widow makes much to the community; and especially calls attention to her simplicity and absolute ignorance of the evils so familiar to the girls of the present day. And she looks as if she expects to be believed. Perhaps credence is difficult; the young lady in question having been for some years considerably in public, where she has learnt to take care of herself with a skill which, how much soever it may be deserving of 140 praise, can scarcely claim to be called ingenuous. She has need of this skill; for, apparently, she and her mother have no male relations belonging to them, and if flirtations are common with the nomadic tribe, marriages are rare. Poor souls; one cannot but pity them for all their labour in vain, all their abortive hopes. For though there is more society in the mode of life they have chosen than they would have had if they had lived quietly down in

the village where they were known and respected, and where, who knows? the fairy prince might one day have alighted—there are very few chances; and marriages among 'the inmates' are as rare as winter swallows.

The men who live in these places, whether as nomadic or permanent guests, never have money enough to marry on; and the flirtations always budding and blossoming by the piano or about the billiard-table never by any chance fructify in marriage. But in spite of their infertile experience you see the same mother and the same daughter year after year, season after season, returning to the charge with renewed vigour, and a hope which is the one indestructible thing about them. Let us deal tenderly with them, poor impecunious nomads; drifting like so much sea-wrack along the restless current of life; and wish them some safe resting-place before it is too late.

A lady nomad of this kind, especially one with a daughter, is strictly orthodox and cultivates with 141 praiseworthy perseverance the society of any clergyman who may have wandered into the community of which she is a member. She is punctual in church-going; and the minister is flattered by her evident appreciation of his sermons, and the readiness with which she can remember certain points of last Sunday's discourse. As a rule she is Evangelically inclined, and is as intolerant of Romanism on the one hand as of Rationalism on the other. She has seen the evils of both, she says, and quotes the state of Rome and of Heidelberg in confirmation. She is as strict in morals as in orthodoxy, and no woman who has got herself talked about, however innocently, need hope for much mercy at her hands. Her Rhadamanthine faculty has apparently ample occasion for exercise, for her list of scandalous chronicles is extensive; and if she is to be believed, she and her daughter are almost the sole examples of a pure and untainted womanhood afloat. She is as rigid too, in all matters connected with her social status; and brings up her daughter in the same way of thinking. By virtue of the admiral or the major, at peace in his grave, they are emphatically ladies; and, though nomadic, impecunious, homeless, and tant soit peu adventuresses, they class themselves as of the cream of the cream, and despise those whose rank is of the uncovenanted kind, and who are gentry, may be, by the grace of God only without any Act of Parliament to help.

Sometimes the lady nomad is a spinster, not 142 necessarily passée, though obviously she cannot be in her first youth; still she may be young enough to be attractive, and adventurous enough to care to attract. Women of this kind, unmarried, nomadic and still young, work themselves into every movement afoot. They even face the perils and discomforts of war-time, and tell their friends at home that they are going out as nurses to the wounded. That dash of the adventuress, of which we have spoken before, runs through all this section of the social nomads; and one wonders why some uncle or cousin, some aunt or family friend, does not catch them up in time.

If not attractive nor passably young, these nomadic spinsters are sure to be exceedingly odd. Constant friction with society in its most selfish form, the absence of home-duties, the want of the sweetness and sincerity of home love, and the habit of change, bring out all that is worst in them and kill all that is best. They have nothing to hope for from society and less to lose; it is wearisome to look amiable and sweet-tempered when you feel bitter and disappointed; and politeness is a farce where the fact of the day is a fight. So the nomadic spinster who has lived so long in this rootless way that she has ceased even to make such fleeting friendships as the mode of life affords—has ceased even to wear the transparent mark of such thin politeness as is required—becomes a 'character' notorious in proportion to her candour. She never stays long in one 143 establishment, and generally leaves abruptly because of a misunderstanding with some other lady, or maybe because some gentleman has unwittingly affronted her. She and the officer's widow are always on peculiarly unfriendly terms, for she resents the pretensions of the officer's daughter, and calls her a bold minx or a sly puss almost within hearing; while she throws grave doubts on the widow herself, and drops hints which the rest of the community gather up like manna, and keep by them, to much the same result as that of the wilderness. But the nomadic spinster soon wanders away to another temporary resting-place; and before half her life is done she becomes as well known to the heads of the various establishments in her line as the taxgatherer himself, and dreaded almost as much.

Nomads are generally remarkable for not leaving tracks behind them. You see them here and there, and they are sure to turn up at Baden-Baden or at Vichy, at Scarborough or at Dieppe, when you least expect them; but you know nothing about them in the interim. They are like those birds which hybernate at some place of retreat no one yet ever found; or like those which migrate, who can tell where? They come and they go. You meet and part and meet again in all manner of unlikely places; and it seems to you that they have been over half the world since you last met, you meanwhile having settled quietly to your work, save for your summer holiday which you are now taking, and which you are enjoying 144 as the nomad cannot enjoy any change that falls to his lot. He is sated with change; wearied of novelty; yet unable to fix himself, however much he may wish it. He has got into the habit of change; and the habit clings even when the desire has gone. Always hoping to be at rest, always intending to settle as years flow on, he never finds the exact place to suit him; only when he feels the end approaching, and by reason of old age and infirmity is a nuisance in the community where formerly he was an acquisition, and where too all that once gave him pleasure has now become an insupportable burden and weariness—only then does he creep away into some obscure and lonely lodging, where he drags out his remaining days alone, and dies without the touch of one loved hand to smooth his pillow, without the sound of one dear voice to whisper to him courage, farewell, and hope. The home he did not plant when he might is impossible to him now, and there is no love that endures if there is no home in which to keep it. And

so all the class of social nomads find when dark days are on them, and society, which cares only to be amused, deserts them in their hour of greatest need.


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