ESSAYS UPON SOCIAL SUBJECTS BOOK SECOND

BY

ELIZA LYNN LINTON

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GREAT GIRLS.

Nothing is more distinctive among women than the difference of relative age to be found between them. Two women of the same number of years will be substantially of different epochs of life—the one faded in person, wearied in mind, fossilized in sympathy; the other fresh both in face and feeling, with sympathies as broad and keen as they were when she was in her first youth; with a brain still as receptive, as quick to learn, a temper still as easy to be amused, as ready to love, as when she emerged from the school-room to the drawing-room. The one you suspect of understating her age by half-a-dozen years or more when she tells you she is not over forty; the other makes you wonder if she has not overstated hers by just so much when she laughingly confesses to the same age. The one is an old woman who seems as if she had never been young, the other 'just a great girl yet,' who seems as if she would never grow old; and nothing is equal between them but the number of days each has lived.

This kind of woman, so fresh and active, so intellectually as well as emotionally alive, is never anything but a girl; never loses some of the sweetest characteristics of girlhood. You see her first as a young wife and mother, and you imagine she has left the school-room for about as many months as she has been married years. Her face has none of that untranslatable expression, that look of robbed bloom, which experience gives; in her manner is none of the preoccupation so observable in most young mothers, whose attention never seems wholly given to the thing on hand, and whose hearts seem always full of a secret care or an unimparted joy. Brisk and airy, braving all weathers, ready for any amusement, interested in the current questions of history and society, by some wonderful faculty of organizing seeming to have all her time to herself as if she had no house cares and no nursery duties, yet these somehow not neglected, she is the very ideal of a happy girl roving through life as through a daisy field, on whom sorrow has not yet laid its hand and to whose lot has fallen no Dead Sea apple. And when one hears her name and style for the first time as a matron, and sees her with two or three sturdy little fellows hanging about her slender neck and calling her mamma, one feels as if nature had somehow made a mistake, and that our slim and simple-mannered damsel had only made-believe to have taken up the serious burdens of life, and was nothing but a great girl after all.

Grown older she is still the great girl she was ten years ago, if her type of girlishness is a little changed and her gaiety of manner a little less persistent. But even now, with a big boy at Eton and a daughter whose presentation is not so far off, she is younger than her staid and melancholy sister, her junior by many years, who has gone in for the Immensities and the Worship of Sorrow, who thinks laughter the sign of a vacant mind,

and that to be interesting and picturesque a woman must have unserviceable nerves and a defective digestion. Her sister looks as if all that makes life worth living for lies behind her, and only the grave is beyond; she, the great girl, with her bright face and even temper, believes that her future will be as joyous as her present, as innocent as her past, as full of love and as purely happy. She has known some sorrows truly, and she has gained such experience as comes only through the rending of the heart-strings; but nothing that she has passed through has seared nor soured her, and if it has taken off just the lighter edge of her girlishness it has left the core as bright and cheery as ever.

In person she is generally of the style called 'elegant' and wonderfully young in mere physical appearance. Perhaps sharp eyes might spy out here and there a little silver thread among the soft brown hair; and when fatigued or set in a cross light, lines not quite belonging to the teens may be traced about her eyes and mouth; but in favourable conditions, with her graceful figure advantageously draped and her fair face flushed and animated, she looks just a great girl, no more; and she feels as she looks. It is well for her if her husband is a wise man, and more proud of her than he is jealous; for he must submit to see her admired by all the men who know her, according to their individual manner of expressing admiration. But as purity of nature and singleness of heart belong to her qualification for great girlishness, he has no cause for alarm, and she is as safe with Don Juan as with St. Anthony.

These great girls, as middle-aged matrons, are often seen in the country; and one of the things which most strikes a Londoner is the abiding youthfulness of this kind of matron. She has a large family, the elders of which are grown up, but she has lost none of the beauty for which her youth was noted, though it is now a different kind of beauty from what it was then; and she has still the air and manners of a girl. She blushes easily, is shy, and sometimes apt to be a little awkward, though always sweet and gentle; she knows very little of real life and less of its vices; she is pitiful to sorrow, affectionate to her friends who are few in number, and strongly attached to her own family; she has no theological doubts, no scientific proclivities, and the conditions of society and the family do not perplex her. She thinks Darwinism and protoplasm dangerous innovations; and the doctrine of Free Love with Mrs. Cady Staunton's development is something too shocking for her to talk about. She lifts her calm clear eyes in wonder at the wild proceedings of the shrieking sisterhood, and cannot for the life of her make out what all this tumult means, and what the women want. For herself, she has no doubts whatever, no moral uncertainties. The path of duty is as plain to her as are the words of the Bible, and she loves her husband too well to wish to be his rival or to desire an individualized existence outside his. She is his wife, she says; and that seems more satisfactory to her than to be herself a Somebody in the full light of notoriety, with him in the shade as her appendage.

If inclined to be intolerant to any one, it is to those who seek to disturb the existing state of things, or whose speculations unsettle men's minds; those who, as she thinks, entangle the sense of that which is clear and straightforward enough if they would but leave it alone, and who, by their love of iconoclasm, run the risk of destroying more than idols. But she is intolerant only because she believes that when men put forth false doctrines they put them forth for a bad purpose, and to do intentional mischief. Had she not this simple faith, which no philosophic questionings have either enlarged or disturbed, she would not be the great girl she is; and what she would have gained in catholicity she would have lost in freshness. For herself, she has no self-asserting power, and would shrink from any kind of public action; but she likes to visit the poor, and is sedulous in the matter of tracts and flannel-petticoats, vexing the souls of the sterner, if wiser, guardians and magistrates by her generosity which they affirm only encourages idleness and creates pauperism. She cannot see it in that light. Charity is one of the cardinal virtues of Christianity; accordingly, charitable she will be, in spite of all that political economists may say.

She belongs to her family, they do not belong to her; and you seldom hear her say 'I went' or 'I did.' It is always 'we;' which, though a small point, is a significant one, showing how little she holds to anything like an isolated individuality, and how entirely she feels a woman's life to belong to and be bound up in her home relations. She is romantic too, and has her dreams and memories of early days; when her eyes grow moist as she looks at her husband—the first and only man she ever loved—and the past seems to be only part of the present. The experience which she must needs have had has served only to make her more gentle, more pitiful, than the ordinary girl, who is naturally inclined to be a little hard; and of all her household she is the kindest and the most intrinsically sympathetic. She keeps up her youth for the children's sake she says; and they love her more like an elder sister than the traditional mother. They never think of her as old, for she is their constant companion and can do all that they do. She is fond of exercise; is a good walker; an active climber; a bold horsewoman; a great promoter of picnics and open-air amusements. She looks almost as young as her eldest daughter differentiated by a cap and covered shoulders; and her sons have a certain playfulness in their love for her which makes them more her brothers than her sons. Some of them are elderly men before she has ceased to be a great girl; for she keeps her youth to the last by virtue of a clear conscience, a pure mind and a loving nature. She is wise in her generation and takes care of her health by means of active habits, fresh air, cold water and a sparing use of medicines and stimulants; and if the dear soul is proud of anything it is of her figure, which she keeps trim and elastic to the last, and of the clearness of her complexion, which no heated rooms have soddened, no accustomed strong waters have clouded nor bloated.

Then there are great girls of another kind—women who, losing the sweetness of youth, do not get in its stead the dignity of maturity; who are fretful, impatient, undisciplined, knowing no more of themselves nor human nature than they did when they were nineteen, yet retaining nothing of that innocent simplicity, that single-hearted freshness and joyousness of nature which one does not wish to see disturbed even for the sake of a deeper knowledge. These are the women who will not get old and who consequently do not keep young; who, when they are fifty, dress themselves in gauze and rosebuds, and think to conceal their years by a judicious use of many paint-pots and the liberality of the hairdresser; who are jealous of their daughters, whom they keep back as much and as long as they can, and terribly aggrieved at their irrepressible six feet of sonship; women who have a trick of putting up their fans before their faces as if they were blushing; who give you the impression of flounces and ringlets, and who flirt by means of much laughter and a long-sustained giggle; who talk incessantly, yet have said nothing to the purpose when they have done; and who simper and confess they are not strong-minded but only 'awfully silly little things,' when you try to lead the conversation into anything graver than fashion and flirting. They are women who never learn repose of mind nor dignity of manner; who never lose their taste for mindless amusements, and never acquire one for nature nor for quiet happiness; and who like to have lovers always hanging about them—men for the most part younger than themselves, whom they call naughty boys and tap playfully by way of rebuke. They are women unable to give young girls good advice on prudence or conduct; mothers who know nothing of children; mistresses ignorant of the alphabet of housekeeping; wives whose husbands are merely the bankers, and most probably the bugbears, of the establishment; women who think it horrible to get old and to whom, when you talk of spiritual peace or intellectual pleasures, you are as unintelligible as if you were discoursing in the Hebrew tongue. As a class they are wonderfully inept; and their hands are practically useless, save as ring-stands and glove-stretchers. For they can do nothing with them, not even frivolous fancy-work. They read only novels; and one of the marvels of their existence is what they do with themselves in those hours when they are not dressing, flirting, nor paying visits.

If they are of a querulous and nervous type, their children fly from them to the furthest corners of the house; if they are molluscous and good-natured, they let themselves be manipulated up to a certain point, but always on the understanding that they are only a few years older than their daughters; almost all these women, by some fatality peculiar to themselves, having married when they were about ten years old, and having given birth to progeny with the uncomfortable property of looking at the least half a dozen years older than they are. This accounts for the phenomenon of a girlish matron of this kind, dressed to represent first youth, with a sturdy black-browed débutante by her side, looking, you would swear to it, of full majority if a day. Her only chance is to get that black-browed tell-tale married out of hand; and this is the reason why so many

daughters of great girls of this type make such notoriously early—and bad—matches; and why, when once married, they are never seen in society again.

Grandmaternity and girlishness scarcely fit in well together, and rosebuds are a little out of place when a nursery of the second degree is established. There are scores of women fluttering through society at this moment whose elder daughters have been socially burked by the friendly agency of a marriage almost as soon as, or even before, they were introduced, and who are therefore, no longer witnesses against the hairdresser and the paint-pots; and there are scores of these same marriageable daughters eating out their hearts and spoiling their pretty faces in the school-room a couple of years beyond their time, that mamma may still believe the world takes her to be under thirty yet—and young at that.

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SHUNTED DOWAGERS.

The typical mother-in-law is, as we all know, fair game for every one's satire; and according to the odd notions which prevail on certain points, a man is assumed to show his love for his wife by systematic disrespect to her mother, and to think that her new affections will be knit all the closer the more loosely he can induce her to hold her old ones. The mother-in-law, according to this view of things, has every fault. She interferes, and always at the wrong time and on the wrong side; she makes a tiff into a quarrel and widens a coolness into a breach; she is self-opinionated and does not go with the times; she treats her daughter like a child and her son-in-law like an appendage; she spoils the elder children and feeds the baby with injudicious generosity; she spends too much on her dress, wears too many rings, trumps her partner's best card and does not attend to the 'call;'—and she is fat. But even the well abused mother-in-law—the portly old dowager who has had her day and is no longer pleasing in the eyes of men—even she has her wrongs like most of us; and if she sometimes asserts her rights more aggressively than patiently, she has to put up with many disagreeable rubs for her own part; and female tempers over fifty are not notorious for humility.

Take the case of a widow with means, whose family is settled. Not a daughter to chaperone, not a son to marry; all are so far happily off her hands, and she is left alone. But what does her loneliness mean? In the first place, while her grief for her husband is yet new—and we will assume that she does grieve for him—she has to turn out of the house where she has been queen and mistress for the best years of her life; to abdicate state and style in favour of her son and her son's wife whom she is sure not to like; and, however good her jointure may be, she must necessarily find her new home one of second-rate importance. Perhaps however, the family objects to her having a home of her own. Dear mamma must give up housekeeping and divide her time among them all; but specially among her daughters, being more likely to get on well with their husbands than with her sons' wives.

Dear mamma has means, be it remembered. Perhaps she is a good natured soul, a trifle weak and vain in proportion; who knows what evil-disposed person may not get influence over her and exercise it to the detriment of all concerned? She has the power of making her will, and, granting that she is proof against the fascinations of some fortune-hunting scamp twenty years at the least her junior—may be forty, who knows? do not men continually marry their grandmothers if they are well paid for it?—and though every daughter's mamma is of course normally superior to weakness of this kind, yet accidents will happen where least expected. And even if there is no possible fear of

the fascinating scamp on the look-out for a widow with a jointure, there are artful companions and intriguing maids who worm themselves into confidence and ultimate power; sly professors of faiths dependent on filthy lucre for their proof of divinity; and on the whole, all things considered, dear mamma's purse and person are safest in the custody of her children. So the poor lady, who was once the head of a place, gives up all title to a home of her own, and spends her time among her married daughters, in whose houses she is neither guest nor mistress. She is only mamma; one of the family without a voice in the family arrangements; a member of a community without a recognized status; shunted; set aside; and yet with dangers of the most delicate kind besetting her path in all directions. Nothing can be much more unsatisfactory than such a position; and none much more difficult to steer through, without renouncing the natural right of self-assertion on the one hand, or certainly rasping the exaggerated susceptibilities of touchy people on the other.

In general the shunted dowager has as little indirect influence as direct power; and her opinion is never asked nor desired as a matter of graceful acknowledgment of her maturer judgment. If she is appealed to, it is in some family dispute between her son and daughter, where her partizanship is sought only as a makeweight for one or other of the belligerents. But, so far as she individually is concerned, she is given to understand that she is rococo, out of date, absurd; that, since she was young and active, things have entered on a new phase where she is nowhere, and that her past experience is not of the slightest use as things are nowadays. If she has still energy enough left, so that she likes to have her say and do her will, she has to pass under a continual fire of opposition. If she is timid, phlegmatic, indolent, or peaceable, and with no fight in her, she is quietly sat upon and extinguished.

Dear mamma is the best creature in the world so long as she is the mere pawn on the young folks' domestic chess-board, to be placed without an opposing will or sentiment of her own. She is the 'greatest comfort' to her daughter; and even her son-in-law assents to her presence, so long as she takes the children when required to do so, does her share of the tending and more than her share of the giving, but never presuming to administer nor to correct; so long as she is placidly ready to take off all the bores; listen to the interminable story-tellers; play propriety for the young people; make conversation for the helplessly stupid or nervous; so long in fact as she will make herself generally useful to others, demand nothing on her own account, and be content to stand on the siding while the younger world whisks up and down at express speed at its pleasure. Let her do more than this—let her sometimes attempt to manage and sometimes object to be managed—let her have a will of her own and seek to impose it—and then 'dear mamma is so trying, so fond of interfering, so unable to understand things;' and nothing but mysterious 'considerations' induce either daughter or son-in-law to keep her.

No one seems to understand the heartache it must have cost her, and that it must be continually costing her, to see herself so suddenly and completely shunted. Only a year ago and she had pretensions of all kinds. Time had dealt with her leniently, and no moment had come when she had suddenly leaped a gulf and passed from one age to another without gradations. She had drifted almost imperceptibly through the various stages into a long term of mature sirenhood, remaining always young and pretty to her husband. But now her widow's cap marks an era in her life, and the loss of her old home a new and descending step in her career. She is plainly held to have done with the world and all individual happiness—all personal importance; plainly told that she is now only an interposing cushion to soften the shock or ease the strain for others. But she does not quite see it for her own part, and after having been so long first—first in her society, in her home, with her husband, with her children—it is a little hard on her that she should have to sink down all at once into a mere rootless waif, a kind of family possession belonging to every one in turn and the common property of all, but possessing nothing of herself.

Of course dear mamma can make herself bitterly disagreeable if she likes. She can taunt instead of letting herself be snubbed. She can interfere where she is not wanted; give unpalatable advice; make unpleasant remarks; tell stinging truths; and in all ways act up to the reputation of the typical mother-in-law. But in general that is only when she has kept her life in her own hands; has still her place and her own home; remains the centre of the family and its recognized head; with the dreadful power of making innumerable codicils and leaving munificent bequests. If she has gone into the Learism of living about among her daughters, it is scarce likely that she has character enough to be actively disagreeable or aggressive.

On a first visit to a country-house it is sometimes difficult to rightly localize the old lady on the sofa who goes in and out of the room apparently without purpose, and who seems to have privileges but no rights. Whose property is she? What is she doing here? She is dear mamma certainly; but is she a personage or a dependent? Is she on a visit like the rest of us? Is she the maternal lodger whose income helps not unhandsomely? or, has she no private fortune, and so lives with her son-in-law because she cannot afford to keep house on her own account? She is evidently shunted, whatever her circumstances, and has no locus standi save that given by sufferance, convenience, or affection. Naturally she is the last of the dowagers visiting at the house. She may come before the younger women, from the respect due to age; but her place is at the rear of all her own contemporaries; not for the graceful fiction of hospitality, but because she is one of the family and therefore must give precedence to strangers.

She is the movable circumstance of the home life. The young wife, of course, has her fixed place and settled duties; the master is the master; the guests have their graduated

rights; but the shunted dowager is peripatetic and elastic as well as shunted, and to be used according to general convenience. If a place is vacant, which there is no one else to fill, dear mamma must please to take it; if the party is larger than there are places, dear mamma must please stay away. She is assumed to have got over the age when pleasure means pleasure, and to know no more of disappointment than of skipping. In fact, she is assumed to have got over all individuality of every kind, and to be able to sacrifice or to restrain as she may be required by the rest.

Perhaps one of her greatest trials lies in the silence she is obliged to keep, if she would keep peace. She must sit still and see things done which are gall and wormwood to her. Say that she has been specially punctilious in habits, suave in bearing, perhaps a trifling humbugging and flattering—she has to make the best of her daughter's brusqueries and uncontrolled tempers, of her son-in-law's dirty boots, and the new religion of outspokenness which both profess. Say that she has been accustomed to speak her mind with the uncompromising boldness of a woman owning a place and stake in the county—she has to curb the natural indignation of her soul when her young people, wiser in their generation or not so securely planted, make friends with all sorts and conditions, are universally sweet to everybody, hunt after popularity with untiring zest, and live according to the doctrine of angels unawares. The ways of the house are not her ways, and things are not ordered as she used to order them. People are invited with whom she would not have shaken hands, and others are left out whose acquaintance she would have specially affected. All sorts of subversive doctrines are afloat, and the old family traditions are sure to be set aside. She abhors the Ritualistic tendencies of her son-in-law, or she despises his Evangelical proclivities; his politics are not sound and his vote fatally on the wrong side; and she laments that her daughter, so differently brought up, should have been won over as she has been to her husband's views. But what of that? She is only a dowager shunted and laid on the shelf; and what she likes or dislikes does not weigh a feather in the balance, so long as her purse and person are safe in the family, and her will securely locked up in the solicitor's iron safe, with no likelihood of secret codicils upstairs. On the whole then, there is a word to be said even for the dreadful mother-in-law of general scorn; and, as the shunted dowager, the poor soul has her griefs of no slight weight and her daily humiliations bitter enough to bear.

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PRIVILEGED PERSONS.

We all number among our acquaintances certain privileged persons; people who make their own laws without regard to the received canons of society, and who claim exemption from some of the moral and most of the conventional obligations which are considered binding on others. The privileged person may be male or female; but is more often the latter; sundry restraining influences keeping men in check which are inoperative with women. Women indeed, when they choose to fall out of the ranks and follow an independent path of their own, care very little for any influences at all, the restraining power which will keep them in line being yet an unknown quantity. As a woman then, we will first deal with the privileged person.

One embodiment of the privileged person is she whose forte lies in saying unpleasant things with praiseworthy coolness. She aims at a reputation for smartness or for honesty, according to the character of her intellect, and she uses what she gets without stint or sparing. If clever, she is noted for her sarcastic speeches and epigrammatic brilliancy; and her good things are bandied about from one to the other of her friends; with an uneasy sense however, in the laughter they excite. For every one feels that he who laughs to-day may have cause to wince to-morrow, and that dancing on one's own grave is by no means an exhilarating exercise.

No one is safe with her—not even her nearest and dearest; and she does not care how deeply she wounds when she is about it. But her victims rarely retaliate; which is the oddest part of the business. They resign themselves meekly enough to the scalpel, and comfort themselves with the reflection that it is only pretty Fanny's way, and that she is known to all the world as a privileged person who may say what she likes. It falls hard though, on the uninitiated and sensitive, when they are first introduced to a privileged person with a talent for saying smart things and no pity to speak of. Perhaps they have learned their manners too well to retort in kind, if even they are able; and so feel themselves constrained to bear the unexpected smart, as the Spartan boy bore his fox. One sees them at times endure their humiliation before folk with a courageous kind of stoicism which would do honour to a better cause. Perhaps they are too much taken aback to be able to marshal their wits for a serviceable counter-thrust; all they can do is to look confused and feel angry; but sometimes, if seldom, the privileged person with a talent for sarcastic sayings meets with her match and gets paid off in her own coin—which greatly offends her, while it rejoices those of her friends who have suffered many things at her hands before. If she is rude in a more sledge-hammer kind of way—rude through what it pleases her to call honesty and the privilege of speaking her mind—her

attacks are easier to meet, being more openly made and less dependent on quickness or subtlety of intellect to parry.

Sometimes indeed, by their very coarseness they defeat themselves. When a woman of this kind says in a loud voice, as her final argument in a discussion, 'Then you must be a fool,' as we have known a woman tell her hostess, she has blunted her own weapon and armed her opponent. All her privileges cannot change the essential constitution of things; and, rudeness being the boomerang of the drawing-room which returns on the head of the thrower, the privileged person who prides herself on her honesty, and who is not too squeamish as to its use, finds herself discomfited by the very silence and forbearance of her victim. In either case however, whether using the rapier or the sledge-hammer, the person privileged in speech is partly a nuisance and partly a stirrer-up of society. People gather round to hear her, when she has grappled with a victim worthy of her steel, and is using it with effect. Yet unless her social status is such that she can command a following by reason of the flunkeyism inherent in human nature, she is sure to find herself dropped before her appointed end has come. People get afraid of her ill-nature for themselves, and tired of hearing the same things repeated of others. For even a clever woman has her intellectual limits, and is forced after a time to double back on herself and re-open the old workings. It is all very well, people think, to read sharp satires on society in the abstract, and to fit the cap as one likes. Even if it fits oneself, one can bear the fool's crown with some small degree of equanimity in the hope that others will not discover the fact; but when it comes to a hand-to-hand attack, with bystanders to witness, and oneself reduced to an ignominious silence, it is another matter altogether; and, however sparkling the gifts of one's privileged friend, one would rather not put oneself in the way of their exercise. So she is gradually shunned till she is finally abandoned; what was once the clever impertinence of a pretty person, or the frank insolence of a cherubic hoyden, having turned by time into the acrid humour of a grim female who keeps no terms with any one, and with whom therefore, no terms are kept. The pretty person given to smart sayings with a sting in them and the cherubic hoyden who allows herself the use of the weapon of honesty, would do well to ponder on the inevitable end, when the only real patent of their privileges has run out, and they have no longer youth and beauty to plead in condonation for their bad breeding.

Another exercise of peculiar privilege is to be found in the matter of flirting. Some women are able to flirt with impunity to an extent which would simply destroy any one else. They flirt with the most delicious frankness, yet for all practical purposes keep their place in society undisturbed and their repute intact. They have the art of making the best of two worlds, the secret of which is all their own, yet which causes the weak to stumble and the rash to fall. They ride on two horses at once, with a skill as consummate as their daring; but the feeble sisters who follow after them slip down between, and come to grief and public disaster as their reward. It is in vain to try to analyze the terms

on which this kind of privilege is founded. Say that one pretty person takes the tone of universal relationship—that she has an illimitable fund of sisterliness always at command for a host of 'dear boys' of her own age; or, when a little older and drawing near to the borders of mature sirenhood, that she is a kind of œcumenical aunt to a large congregation of well-looking nephews—she may steer safely through the shallows of this dangerous coast and land at last on the terra firma of a respected old age; but let another try it, and she goes to the bottom like a stone. And yet the first has pushed her privileges as far as they will go, while the second has only played with hers; but the one comes triumphantly into port with all colours flying, and the other makes shipwreck and is lost.

And why the one escapes and the other goes down is a mystery given to no one to fathom. But so it is; and every student of society is aware of this strange elasticity of privilege with certain pretty friends, and must have more than once wondered at Mrs. Grundy's leniency to the flagrant sinner on the right side of the square, coupled with her severity to the lesser naughtiness on the left. The flirting form of privilege is the most partial in its limitations of all; and things which one fair patentee may do with impunity, retaining her garlands, will cause another to be stripped bare and chastised with scorpions; and no one knows why nor how the difference is made.

Another self-granted privilege is the licence some give themselves in the way of taking liberties, and the boldness with which they force your barriers. Indeed there is no barrier that can stand against these resolute invaders. You are not at home, say, to all the world, but the privileged person is sure you will see him or her, and forthwith mounts your stairs with a cheerful conscience, carrying his welcome with him—so he says. Admitted into your penetralia, the privileges of this bold sect increase, being of the same order as the traditional ell on the grant of the inch. They drop in at all times, and are never troubled with modest doubts. They elect themselves your 'casuals,' for whom you are supposed to have always a place at your table; and you are obliged to invite them into the dining-room when the servant sounds the gong and the roast mutton makes itself evident. They hear you are giving an evening, and they tell you they will come, uninvited; taking for granted that you intended to ask them, and would have been sorry if you had forgotten. They tack themselves on to your party at a fête and air their privileges in public—when the man whom of all others you would like best for a son-in-law is hovering about, kept at bay by the privileged person's familiar manner towards yourself and your daughter.

Your friend would laugh at you if you hinted to him that he might by chance be misinterpreted. He argues that every one knows him and his ways; and acts as if he held a talisman by which the truth could be read through the thickest crust of appearances. It would be well sometimes if he had this talisman, for his familiarity is a bewildering kind

of thing to strangers on their first introduction to a house where he has privileges; and it takes time, and some misapprehension, before it is rightly understood. We do not know how to catalogue this man who is so wonderfully at ease with our new friends. We know that he is not a relation, and yet he acts as one bound by the closest ties. The girls are no longer children, but his manner towards them would be a little too familiar if they were half a dozen years younger than they are; and we come at last to the conclusion that the father owes him money, or that the wife had been—well, what?—in the days gone by; and that he is therefore master of the situation and beyond the reach of rebuke. All things considered, this kind of privilege is dangerous, and to be carefully avoided by parents and guardians. Indeed, every form of this patent is dangerous; the chances being that sooner or later familiarity will degenerate into contempt and a bitter rupture take the place of the former excessive intimacy.

The neglect of all ordinary social observances is another reading of the patent of privilege which certain people grant themselves. These are the people who never return your calls; who do not think themselves obliged to answer your invitations; who do not keep their appointments; and who forget their promises. It is useless to reproach them, to expect from them the grace of punctuality, the politeness of a reply, or the faintest stirrings of a social conscience in anything. They are privileged to the observance of a general neglect, and you must make your account with them as they are. If they are good-natured, they will spend much time and energy in framing apologies which may or may not tell. If women, graceful, and liking to be liked without taking much trouble about it, they will profess a thousand sorrows and shames the next time they see you, and play the pretty hypocrite with more or less success. You must not mind what they do, they say pleadingly; no one does; they are such notoriously bad callers no one ever expects them to pay visits like other people; or they are so lazy about writing, please don't mind if they don't answer your letters nor even your invitations: they don't mean to be rude, only they don't like writing; or they are so dreadfully busy they cannot do half they ought and are sometimes obliged to break their engagements; and so on. And you, probably for the twentieth time, accept excuses which mean nothing but 'I am a privileged person,' and go on again as before, hoping for better things against all the lessons of past experience. How can you do otherwise with that charming face looking so sweetly into yours, and the coquettish little hypocrisies played off for your benefit? If that charming face were old or ugly, things would be different; but so long as women possess la beauté du diable men can do nothing but treat them as angels.

And so we come round to the root of the matter once more. The privileged person, whose patent society has endorsed, must be a young, pretty, charming woman. Failing these conditions, she is a mere adventuress whose discomfiture is not far off; with these, her patent will last just so long as they do. And when they have gone, she will degenerate

into a 'horror,' at whom the bold will laugh, the timid tremble, and whose company the wise will avoid.

ESSAYS UPON SOCIAL SUBJECTS BOOK SECOND BY ELIZA LYNN LINTON

MODERN MAN-HATERS.

Among the many odd social phenomena of the present day may be reckoned the class of women who are professed despisers and contemners of men; pretty misanthropes, doubtful alike of the wisdom of the past and the distinctions of nature, but vigorously believing in a good time coming when women are to take the lead and men to be as docile dogs in their wake. To be sure, as if by way of keeping the balance even and maintaining the sum of forces in the world in due equilibrium, a purely useless and absurd kind of womanhood is more in fashion than it used to be; but this does not affect either the accuracy or the strangeness of our first statement; and the number of women now in revolt against the natural, the supremacy of men is something unparalleled in our history. Both before and during the first French Revolution the esprits forts in petticoats were agents of no small account in the work of social reorganization going on; but hitherto women, here in England, have been content to believe as they have been taught, and to trust the men to whom they belong with a simple kind of faith in their friendliness and good intentions, which reads now like a tradition of the past.

With the advanced class of women, the modern man-haters, one of the articles of their creed is to regard men as their natural enemies from whom they must both protect themselves and be protected; and one of their favourite exercises is to rail at them as both weak and wicked, both moral cowards and personal bullies, with whom the best wisdom is to have least intercourse, and on whom no woman who has either common-sense or self-respect would rely. To those who get the confidence of women many startling revelations are made; but one of the most startling is the fierce kind of contempt for men, and the unnatural revolt against anything like control or guidance, which animates the class of modern man-haters. That husbands, fathers, brothers should be thought by women to be tyrannical, severe, selfish, or anything else expressive of the misuse of strength, is perhaps natural and no doubt too often deserved; but we confess it seems an odd inversion of relations when a pretty, frail, delicate woman, with a narrow forehead, accuses her broad-shouldered, square-browed male companions of the meaner and more cowardly class of faults hitherto considered distinctively feminine. And when she says with a disdainful toss of her small head, 'Men are so weak and unjust, I have no respect for them!' we wonder where the strength and justice of the world can have taken shelter, for, if we are to trust our senses, we can scarcely credit her with having them in her keeping.

On the other hand, the man-hater ascribes to her own sex every good quality under heaven; and, not content with taking the more patient and negative virtues which have always been allowed to women, boldly bestows on them the energetic and active as well,

and robs men of their inborn characteristics that she may deck her own sex with their spoils. She grants, of course, that men are superior in physical strength and courage; but she qualifies the admission by adding that all they are good for is to push a way for her in a crowd, to protect her at night against burglars, to take care of her on a journey, to fight for her when occasion demands, to bear the heavy end of the stick always, to work hard that she may enjoy and encounter dangers that she may be safe. This is the only use of their lives, so far as she is concerned. And to women of this way of thinking the earth is neither the Lord's, nor yet man's, but woman's.

Apart from this mere brute strength which has been given to men mainly for her advantage, she says they are nuisances and for the most part shams; and she wonders with less surprise than disdain at those of her sisters who have kept trust in them; who still honestly profess to both love and respect them; and who are not ashamed to own that they rely on men's better judgment in all important matters of life, and look to them for counsel and protection generally. The modern man-hater does none of these things. If she has a husband she holds him as her enemy ex officio, and undertakes home-life as a state of declared warfare where she must be in antagonism if she would not be in slavery. Has she money? It must be tied up safe from his control; not as a joint precaution against future misfortune, but as a personal protection against his malice; for the modern theory is that a husband will, if he can get it, squander his wife's money simply for cruelty and to spite her, though in so doing he may ruin himself as well. It is a new reading of the old saying about being revenged on one's face. Has she friends whom he, in his quality of man of the world, knows to be unsuitable companions for her, and such as he conscientiously objects to receive into his house? His advice to her to drop them is an unwarrantable interference with her most sacred affections, and she stands by her undesirable acquaintances, for whom she has never particularly cared until now, with the constancy of a martyr defending her faith. If it would please her to rush into public life as the noisy advocate of any nasty subject that may be on hand—his refusal to have his name dragged through the mire at the instance of her folly is coercion in its worst form—the coercion of her conscience, of her mental liberty; and she complains bitterly to her friends among the shrieking sisterhood of the harsh restrictions he places on her freedom of action. Her heart is with them, she says; and perhaps she gives them pecuniary and other aid in private; but she cannot follow them on to the platform, nor sign her name to passionate manifestoes as ignorant as they are unseemly; nor tout for signatures to petitions on things of which she knows nothing, and the true bearing of which she cannot understand; nor dabble in dirt till she has lost the sense of its being dirt at all. And, not being able to disgrace her husband that she may swell the ranks of the unsexed, she is quoted by the shriekers as one among many examples of the subjection of women and the odious tyranny under which they live.

As for the man, no hard words are too hard for him. It is only enmity which animates him, only tyranny and oppression which govern him. There is no intention of friendly guidance in his determination to prevent his wife from making a gigantic blunder—feeling of kindly protection in the authority which he uses to keep her from offering herself as a mark for public ridicule and damaging discussion, wherein the bloom of her name and nature would be swept away for ever. It is all the base exercise of an unrighteous power; and the first crusade to be undertaken in these latter days is the woman's crusade against masculine supremacy.

Warm partizan however, as she is of her own sex, the modern man-hater cannot forgive the woman we spoke of who still believes in old-fashioned distinctions; who thinks that nature framed men for power and women for tenderness, and that the fitting, because the natural, division of things is protection on the one side and a reasonable measure of—we will not mince the word—obedience on the other. For indeed the one involves the other. Women of this kind, whose sentiment of sex is natural and healthy, the modern man-hater regards as traitors in the camp; or as slaves content with their slavery, and therefore in more pitiable case than those who, like herself, jangle their chains noisily and seek to break them by loud uproar.

But even worse than the women who honestly love and respect the men to whom they belong, and who find their highest happiness in pleasing them and their truest wisdom in self-surrender, are those who frankly confess the shortcomings of their own sex, and think the best chance of mending a fault is first to understand that it is a fault. With these worse than traitors no terms are to be kept; and the man-haters rise in a body and ostracize the offenders. To be known to have said that women are weak; that their best place is at home; that filthy matters are not for their handling; that the instinct of feminine modesty is not a thing to be disregarded in the education of girls nor the action of matrons; are sins for which these self-accusers are accounted 'creatures' not fit for the recognition of the nobler-souled man-hater. The gynecian war between these two sections of womanhood is one of the oddest things belonging to this odd condition of affairs.

This sect of modern man-haters is recruited from three classes mainly—those who have been cruelly treated by men, and whose faith in one half of the human race cannot survive their own one sad experience; those restless and ambitious persons who are less than women, greedy of notoriety, indifferent to home life, holding home duties in disdain, with strong passions rather than warm affections, with perverted instincts in one direction and none worthy of the name in another; and those who are the born vestals of nature, whose organization fails in the sweeter sympathies of womanhood, and who are unsexed by the atrophy of their instincts as the other class are by the perversion and coarsening of theirs. By all these men are held to be enemies and

oppressors; and even love is ranked as a mere matter of the senses, whereby women are first subjugated and then betrayed.

The crimes of which these modern man-haters accuse their hereditary enemies are worthy of Munchausen. A great part of the sorry success gained by the opposers of the famous Acts has been due to the monstrous fictions which have been told of men's dealings with the women under consideration. No brutality has been too gross to be related as an absolute truth, of which the name, address, and all possible verification could be given, if desired. And the women who have taken the lead in this matter have not been afraid to ascribe to some of the most honourable names in the opposite ranks words and deeds which would have befouled a savage. Details of every apocryphal crime have been passed from one credulous or malicious matron to the other, over the five o'clock tea; and tender-natured women, horror-stricken at what they heard, have accepted as proofs of the ineradicable enmity of man to woman these unfounded fables which the unsexed so positively asserted among themselves as facts.

The ease of conscience with which the man-hating propagandists have accepted and propagated slanderous inventions in this matter has been remarkable, to say the least of it; and were it not for the gravity of the principles at stake, and the nastiness of the subject, the stories of men's vileness in connexion with this matter, would make one of the absurdest jest-books possible, illustrative of the credulity, the falsehood, and the ingenious imagination of women. We do not say that women have no just causes of complaint against men. They have; and many. And so long as human nature is what it is, strength will at times be brutal rather than protective, and weakness will avenge itself with more craft than patience. But that is a very different thing from the sectional enmity which the modern man-haters assert, and the revolt which they make it their religion to preach. No good will come of such a movement, which is in point of fact creating the ill-feeling it has assumed. On the contrary, if women will but believe that on the whole men wish to be their friends and to treat them with fairness and generosity, they will find the work of self-protection much easier and the reconcilement of opposing interests greatly simplified.

ESSAYS UPON SOCIAL SUBJECTS BOOK SECOND BY ELIZA LYNN LINTON

VAGUE PEOPLE.

The core of society is compact enough, made up as it is of those real doers of the world's work who are clear as to what they want and who pursue a definite object with both meaning and method. But outside this solid nucleus lies a floating population of vague people; nebulous people; people without mental coherence or the power of intellectual growth; people without purpose, without aim, who drift with any current anywhere, making no attempt at conscious steering and having no port to which they desire to steer; people who are emphatically loose in their mental hinges, and who cannot be trusted with any office requiring distinct perception or exact execution; people to whom existence is something to be got through with as little trouble and as much pleasure as may be, but who have not the faintest idea that life contains a principle which each man ought to make clear to himself and work out at any cost, and to which he ought to subordinate and harmonize all his faculties and his efforts. These vague people of nebulous minds compose the larger half of the world, and count for just so much dead weight which impedes, or gives its inert strength to the active agents, as it chances to be handled. They are the majority who vote in committees and all assemblies as they are influenced by the one or two clear-minded leaders who know what they are about, and who drive them like sheep by the mere force of a definite idea and a resolute will.

Yet if there is nothing on which vague people are clear, and if they are not difficult to influence as the majority, there is much on which they are positive as a matter of private conviction. In opposition to the exhortation to be able to give a reason for the faith that is in us, they can give no reason for anything they believe, or fancy they believe. They are sure of the result; but the logical method by which that result has been reached is beyond their power to remember or understand. To argue with them is to spend labour and strength in vain, like trying to make ropes out of sea-sand. Beaten off at every point, they settle down again into the old vapoury, I believe; and it is like fighting with ghosts to attempt to convince them of a better way. They look at you helplessly; assent loosely to your propositions; but when you come to the necessary deduction, they double back in a vague assertion that they do not agree with you—they cannot prove you wrong but they are sure that they are right; and you know then that the collapse is hopeless. If this meant tenacity, it would be so far respectable, even though the conviction were erroneous; but it is the mere unimpressible fluidity of vagueness, the impossibility of giving shape and coherence to a floating fog or a formless haze.

Vague as to the basis of their beliefs, they are vaguer still as to their facts. These indeed are like a ladder of which half the rungs are missing. They never remember a story and

they cannot describe what they have seen. Of the first they are sure to lose the point and to entangle the thread; of the last they forget all the details and confound both sequence and position. As to dates, they are as if lost in a wood when you require definite centuries, years, months; but they are great in the chronological generosity of 'about,' which is to them what the Middle Ages and Classic Times are to uncertain historians. It is as much as they can do to remember their own birthday; but they are never sure of their children's; and generally mix up names and ages in a manner that exasperates the young people like a personal insult.

With the best intentions in the world they do infinite mischief. They detail what they think they have heard of their neighbours' sayings and doings; but as they never detail anything exactly, nor twice alike, by the time they have told the story to half a dozen friends they have given currency to half a dozen different chimeras which never existed save in their own woolly imaginations. No repute is safe with them, even though they may be personally good-natured and anxious not to do any one harm; for they are so vague that they are always setting afloat exaggerations which are substantially falsehoods; and if you tell them the most innocent fact of any one you would not injure for worlds—say your daughter or your dearest friend—they are sure to repeat it with additions and distortions, till they have made it into a Frankenstein which no one now can subdue.

Beside this mental haziness, which neither sees nor shapes a fact correctly, vague people are loose and unstable in their habits. They know nothing of punctuality at home nor abroad; and you are never sure that you will not stumble on them at meal-times at what time soever you may call. But worse than this, your own meal-times, or any other times, are never safe from them. They float into your house uncertainly, vaguely, without purpose, with nothing to say and nothing to do, and for no reason that you can discover. And when they come they stay; and you cannot for the life of you find out what they want, nor why they have come at all. They invade you at all times; in your busy hours; on your sacred days; and sit there in a chaotic kind of silence, or with vague talk which tires your brains to bring to a focus. But they are too foggy to understand anything like a delicate hint, and if you want to get rid of them, you must risk a quarrel and effectively shoulder them out. They will be no loss. They are so much driftweed in your life, and you can make no good of them for yourself nor others.

Even when they undertake to help you, they do you more harm than good by the hazy way in which they understand, and the inexactness with which they carry out, your wishes. They volunteer to get you by favour the thing you want and cannot find in the general way of business—say, something of a peculiar shade of olive-green—and they bring you in triumph a brilliant cobalt. They know the very animal you are looking for, they say, with a confidence that impresses you, and they send to your stable a grey horse

to match your bay pony; and if you trust to their uncontrolled action in your affairs, you find yourself committed to responsibilities you cannot meet and whereby you are brought to the verge of destruction.

They do all this mischief, not for want of goodwill but for want of definiteness of perception; and are as sorry as you are when they make 'pie' and not a legible sheet. Their desire is good, but a vague desire to help is equal to no help at all; or even worse—it is a positive evil, and throws you wrong by just so much as it attempts to set you straight. They are as unsatisfactory if you try to help them. They are in evil case, and you are philanthropically anxious to assist them. You think that one vigorous push would lift the car of their fortunes out of the rut in which it has stuck; and you go to them with the benevolent design of lending your shoulder as the lever. You question them as to the central fact which they wish changed; for you know that in most cases misfortunes crystallize round one such evil centre, which, being removed, the rest would go well. But your vague friends can tell you nothing. They point out this little superficial inconvenience, that small remediable annoyance, as the utmost they can do in the way of definiteness; but when you want to get to the core, you find nothing but a cloudy complaint of general ill-will, or a universal run of untoward circumstances with which you cannot grapple. To cut off the hydra's heads was difficult enough; but could even Hercules have decapitated the Djinn who rose in a volume of smoke from the fisherman's jar?

It is the same in matters of health. Only medical men know to the full the difficulty of dealing with vague people when it is necessary that these should be precise. They can localize no pain, define no sensations. If the doctor thinks he has caught hold of one leading symptom, it fades away as he tries to examine it; and, probe as he may, he comes to nothing more definite than a pervading sense of discomfort, which he must resolve into its causes as he best can. So with their suspicions; and vague people are often strangely suspicious and distrustful. They tell you in a loose kind of way that such or such a man is a rogue, such or such a woman no better than she should be. You ask them for their data—they have none; you suggest that they are mistaken, or at least that they should hold themselves as mistaken until they can prove the contrary, and you offer your version of the reputations aspersed—your vague friends listen to you amiably, then go back on their charge and say, 'I am sure of it'—which ends the conversation. They rely on their impression as other people rely on known facts; and a foggy belief is to them what a mathematical demonstration is to the exact.

In business matters they are simply maddening. They never have the necessary papers; they do not answer letters; they confuse your questions and reply at random or not at all; and they forget all dates and details. When they go to their lawyer on business they leave certificates and drafts behind them locked up where no one can get at them; or if

they send directions and the keys, they tell the servant to look for an oblong blue envelope in the right-hand drawer, when they ought to have said a square white parcel in the left. They give you vague commissions to execute; and you have to find your way in the fog to the best of your ability. They say they want something like something else you have never seen, and they cannot give an address more exact than 'somewhere in Oxford Street.' They think the man's name is Baker, or something like that. Perhaps it is Flower; but the suggestion of ideas ought to be intelligible to you, and is quite near enough for them. They ask you to meet them when they come up to London, but they do not give you either the station or the train. You have to make a guess as near as you can; and when you reproach them, they pay you the compliment of saying you are so clever, it was not necessary for them to explain.

If they have any friends out in Australia or India, they inquire of you, just returned, if you happened to meet them? When you ask, Where were they stationed?—they say they do not know; and when you suggest that Madras and Calcutta are not in the same Presidencies, that India is a large place and Australia not quite like an English county, they look helpless and bewildered, and drift away into the vague geography familiar to them, 'somewhere in India,' 'somewhere in Australia,' and 'I thought you might have met them.' For geography, like history, is one of the branches of the tree of knowledge they have never climbed, and the fruits thereof are as though they were not.

But apart from the personal discomforts to which vague people subject themselves, and the absurdities of which they are guilty, one cannot help speculating on the spiritual state of folks to whom nothing is precise, nothing definite, and no question of faith clearly thought out. To be sure they may be great in the realm of conviction; but so is the African savage when he hears the ghosts of his ancestors pass howling in the woods; so is the Assassin of the Mountain, when he sees heaven open as he throws himself on the spears of his enemies in an ecstacy of faith, to be realized by slaughter and suicide. Convictions based on imagination, unsupported by facts or proofs, are as worthless in a moral as in a logical point of view; but the vague have nothing better; and whether as politicians or as pietists, though they are warm partizans they are but feeble advocates, fond of flourishing about large generalities, but impossible to be pinned to any point and unable to defend any position. To those who must have something absolute and precise, however limited—one inch of firmly-laid foundation on which to build up the superstructure—it is a matter of more wonder than envy how the vague are content to live for ever in a haze which has no clearness of outline, no definiteness of detail, and how they can make themselves happy in a name—calling their fog faith, and therewith counting themselves blessed.

ESSAYS UPON SOCIAL SUBJECTS BOOK SECOND BY ELIZA LYNN LINTON

ARCADIA.

Perhaps the largest amount of simple pleasure possible to adult life is to be found in the first weeks of the summer's holiday, when the hard-worked man of business leaves his office and all its anxieties behind him, and goes off to the sea-side or the hills for a couple of months' relaxation. Everything is so fresh to him, it is like the renewal of his boyhood; and if he happens to have chosen a picturesque place, where the houses stand well and make that ornate kind of landscape to be found in show-places, he wonders how it is that people who can stay here ever leave, or tire of the beauties that are so delightful to him. Yet he hears of this comfortable mansion, with its park and well-appointed grounds, waiting for an occupant; he is told of that fairyland cottage, embowered in roses and jessamine, with a garden gay and redolent with flowers, to be had for a mere song; and he finds to his surprise that the owners of these choice corners of Arcadia are only anxious to escape from what he would, if he could, be only anxious to retain.

In his first days this restlessness, this discontent, is simply inconceivable. What more do they want than what they have? Why, that field lying there in the sunshine, dotted about with dun-coloured cows which glow like glorified Cuyps in the evening red, and backed by rock and tree and tumbling cascade, would be enough to make him happy. He could never weary of such a lovely bit of home scenery; and if to this he adds a view of the sea, or the crags and purple shadows of a mountain, he has wherewith to make him blessed for the remainder of his life. So he thinks while the smoke of London and the sulphur of the Metropolitan still cling about his throat, and the roar of the streets has not quite died out of his ears.

The woods are full of flowers and the rarer kind of insects, and he is never sated with the sea. There is the trout stream as clear as crystal, where he is sure of a rise if he waits long enough; the moors, where he may shoot if he can put up a bird to shoot at, are handy; and there is no end to the picturesque bits just made for his sketch-book. Whatever his tastes may make him—naturalist, sailor, sportsman, artist—he has ample scope for their exercise; and ten or eleven months' disuse gives him a greater zest now that his playtime has come round again. At every turn he falls upon little scenes which give him an odd pleasure, as if they belonged to another life—things he has seen in old paintings, or read of in quaint books, long ago. Here go by two countrywomen, whose red and purple dresses are touched by the sun with startling effect, as they wind up the grey hillside road; there clatters past on horseback a group of market-girls with flapping straw hats, and carrying their baskets on their arms as if they were a set of Gainsborough's models

come back to life, who turn their dark eyes and fresh comely faces to the London man with frank curiosity as they canter on and smother him with dust. Now he passes through the midst of a village fair, where youths are dancing in a barn to the sound of a cracked fiddle, and where, standing under an ivied porch, a pretty young woman unconsciously makes a picture as she bends down to fill a little child's held-up pinafore with sweets and cakes. The idyl here is so complete that the contemplation of pence given for the accommodation of the barn, or the calculation of shillings to be spent in beer afterwards, or the likelihood that the little one had brought a halfpenny in its chubby fist for the good things its small soul coveted, does not enter his mind.

The idea of base pelf in a scene so pure and innocent would be a kind of high treason to the poetic instinct; so the London man instinctively feels, glad to recognize the ideal he is mainly responsible for making. How can it be otherwise? A heron is fishing in the river; a kingfisher flashes past; swallows skim the ground or dart slanting above his head; white-sailed boats glide close inshore; a dragon-fly suns itself on a tall plumed thistle; young birds rustle in and out of the foliage; distant cattle low; cottage children laugh; everywhere he finds quiet, peace, absolute social repose, the absence of disturbing passions; and it seems to him that all who live here must feel the same delightful influences as those which he is feeling now, and be as innocent and virtuous as the place is beautiful and quiet.

But the charm does not last. Very few of us retain to the end of our holidays the same enthusiastic delight in our Arcadia that we had in the beginning. Constant change of Arcadias keeps up the illusion better; and with it the excitement; but a long spell in one place, however beautiful—unless indeed, it lasts so long that one becomes personally fond of the place and interested in the people—is almost sure to end in weariness. At first the modern pilgrim is savagely disinclined to society and his kind. All the signs and circumstances of the life he has left behind him are distasteful. He likes to watch the fishing-boats, but he abhors the steamers which put into his little harbour, and the excursionists who come by them he accounts as heathens and accursed. Trains, like steamers, are signs of a reprobate generation and made only for evildoers. He has no reverence for the post, and his soul is not rejoiced at the sight of letters. Even his daily paper is left unopened, and no change of Ministry counts as equal in importance with the picturesque bits he wishes to sketch, or the rare ferns and beetles to be found by long rambles and much diligence. By degrees the novelty wears off. His soul yearns after the life he has left, and he begins to look for the signs thereof with interest, not to say pleasure. He watches the arrival of the boat, or he strolls up to the railway station and speculates on the new comers with benevolence. If he sees a casual acquaintance, he hails him with enthusiastic cordiality; and in his extremity is reduced to fraternize with men 'not in his way.' He becomes peevish at the lateness of the mail, and he reads his Times from beginning to end, taking in even the agony column and the advertisements.

He finds his idyllic pictures to be pictures, and nothing more. His Arcadians are no better than their neighbours; and, as for the absence of human passions—they are merely dwarfed to the dimensions of the life, and are as relatively strong here as elsewhere. The inhabitants of those flowery cottages quarrel among each other for trifles which he would have thought only children could have noticed; and they gossip to an extent of which he in his larger metropolitan life has no experience.

If he stays a few weeks longer than is the custom of visitors, he is as much an object of curiosity and surmise as if he were a man of another hemisphere; and he may think himself fortunate if vague reports do not get afloat touching his honesty, his morality, or his sanity. Nine times out of ten, if a personage at home, he is nobody here. He may be sure that, however great his name in art and literature, it will not be accounted to him for honour—it will only place him next to a well-conditioned mountebank; political fame, patent to all the world, rank which no one can mistake, and money which all may handle, alone going down in remote country places and carrying esteem along with them. If a wise man, he will forgive the uncharitable surmises and the contempt of which he is the object, knowing the ignorance of life as well as the purposeless vacuity from which they spring; but they are not the less unpleasant, and to understand a cause is not therefore to rejoice in the effect.

As time goes on, he finds Arcadian poverty of circumstance gradually becoming unbearable. He misses the familiar conveniences and orderly arrangements of his London life. He has a raging tooth, and there is no dentist for miles round; he falls sick, or sprains his ankle, and the only doctor at hand is a half tipsy vet., or perhaps an old woman skilled in herbs, or a bone-setter with a local reputation. His letters go astray among the various hands to which they are entrusted; his paper is irregular; Punch and his illustrated weeklies come a day late, with torn covers and greasy thumbmarks testifying to the love of pictorial art which encountered them by the way. He finds that he wants the excitement of professional life and the changeful action of current history. He feels shunted here, out of the world, in a corner, set aside, lost. The rest is still delicious; but he misses the centralized interest of metropolitan life, and catches himself hankering after the old intellectual fleshpots with the fervour of an exile, counting the days of his further stay.

And then at last this rest, which has been so sweet, becomes monotony, and palls on him. One trout is very like another trout, barring a few ounces of weight. When he has expatiated on his first find of moon-fern, and dug it up carefully by the roots for his own fernery at Bayswater, he is slightly disgusted to come upon many tufts of moon-fern, and to know that it is not so very rare hereabouts after all, and that he cannot take away half he sees. Then too, he begins to understand the true meaning of the pictures, Gainsborough and others, which were so quaintly beautiful to him in the early days. The

idyllic youths dancing in the beerhouse barn are clumsy louts who are kept from the commission of great offences mainly because they have no opportunity for dramatic sins; but they indemnify themselves by petty agricultural pilferings, and they get boozy on small beer. The pretty market-girls cantering by, are much like other daughters of Eve elsewhere, save that they have more familiarity with certain facts of natural life than good girls in town possess, and are a trifle more easy to dupe. On the whole, he finds human nature much the same in essentials here as in London—Arcadia being the poorer of the two, inasmuch as it wants the sharpness, the deftness, the refinement of bearing given by much intercourse and the more intimate contact of classes.

By the time his holidays are over, our London man goes back to his work invigorated in body, but quite sufficiently sated in mind to return with pleasure to his old pursuits. He walks into the office decidedly stouter than when he left, much sunburnt, and unfeignedly glad to see them all again. It pleases him to feel like MacGregor on his native heath once more; though his native heath is only a dingy office in the E.C. district, with a view of his rival's chimney-pots. Still it is pleasant; and to know that he is recognized as Mr. So-and-So of the City, a safe man and with a character to lose, is more gratifying to his pride than to have his quality and standing discussed in village back-parlours and tap-rooms, and the question whether he is a man whom Arcadia may trust, gravely debated by boors whose pence are not as his pounds. He speaks with rapture of his delightful holiday, and extols the virtues of Arcadia and the Arcadians as warmly as if he believed in them. Perhaps he grumbles ostentatiously at his return to harness; but in his heart he knows it to be the better life; for, delicious as it is to sit in the sun eating lotuses, it is nobler to weed out tares and to plant corn.

The peace to which we are all looking is not to be had in a Highland glen nor a Devonshire lane; and beautiful as are the retreats and show-places to which men of business rush for rest and refreshment—peaceful as they are to look at, and happy as it seems to us their inhabitants must be—it is all only a matter of the eye. They are Arcadias, if one likes to call them so; but while a man's powers remain to him they are halting-places only, not homes; and he who would make them his home before his legitimate time, would come to a weariness which should cause him to regret bitterly and often the collar which had once so galled him, and the work at the hardness of which he had so often growled.

ESSAYS UPON SOCIAL SUBJECTS BOOK SECOND BY ELIZA LYNN LINTON

STRANGERS AT CHURCH.

If nothing is sacred to a sapper, neither is anything sacred to temper, ostentation, vanity; and church as little as any place else. In those thronged show-places which have what is called a summer season, church is the great Sunday entertainment; and when the service is of an ornate kind, and the strangers' seats are chairs placed at the west end, where in old times the village choir or the village schoolboys used to be, a great deal of human life goes on among the occupants; and there are certain displays of temper and feeling which make you ask yourself whether these strangers think it a religious service, or an operatic, at which they have come to assist, and whether what you see about you is quite in consonance with the spirit of the place or not. If the church is one that presents scenic attractions in the manner in which the service is conducted, there is a run on the front middle seats, as if the ceremonies to be performed were so much legerdemain or theatrical spectacle, of which you must have a good view if you are to have your money's worth; and the more knowing of the strangers take care to be early in the field, and to establish themselves comfortably before the laggards come up. And when the best places are all filled, and the laggards do come up, then the human comedy begins.

Here trip in a couple of giggling girls, greatly conscious of their youth and good looks, but still more conscious of their bonnets. They look with tittering dismay at the crowded seats all along the middle, and when the verger makes them understand that they must go to the back of the side aisle, where they can be seen by no one but will only be able to hear the service and say their prayers, they hesitate and whisper to each other before they finally go up, feeling that the great object for which they came to church has failed them, and they had better have stayed away and taken their chance on the parade. When they speak of it afterwards, they say it was 'awfully slow sitting there;' and they determine to be earlier another time.

There sweep in a triad of superbly dressed women with fans and scent-bottles, who disdainfully decline the back places which the same verger, with a fine sense of justice and beginning to fail a little in temper, inexorably assigns them. They too confer together, but by no means in whispers; and finally elect to stand in the middle aisle, trusting to their magnificence and quiet determination to get 'nice places' in the pewed sittings. They are fine ladies who look as if they were performing an act of condescension by coming at all without special privileges and separation from the vulgar; as if they had an inherent right to worship God in a superior and aristocratic manner, and were not to be confounded with the rest of the miserable sinners who ask

for mercy and forgiveness. They are accustomed to the front seats everywhere; so why not in the place where they say sweetly they are 'nothing of themselves,' and pray to be delivered 'from pride, vainglory, and hypocrisy'? That old lady, rouged and dyed and dressed to represent the heyday of youth, who also is supposed to come to church to say her prayers and confess her sins, looks as if she would be more at home at the green tables at Homburg than in an unpretending chair of the strangers' quarter in the parish church. But she finds her places in her Prayer-book, if after a time and with much seeking; and when she nods during the sermon, she has the good-breeding not to snore. She too, has the odd trick of looking like condescension when she comes in, trailing her costly silks and laces behind her; and by her manner she leaves on you the impression that she was a beauty in her youth; has been always used to the deference and admiration of men; to servants and a carriage and purple and fine linen; that all of you, whom she has the pleasure of surveying through her double eyeglass, are nobodies in comparison with her august self; and that she is out of place among you. She makes her demonstration, like the rest, when she finds that the best seats are already filled and that no one offers to stir that she may be well placed; and if she is ruthlessly relegated to the back, and stays there, as she does sometimes, your devotions are rendered uncomfortable by the unmistakable protest conveyed in her own. Only a few humble Christians in fashionable attire take those back places contentedly, and find they can say their prayers and sing their hymns with spiritual comfort to themselves, whether they are shut out from a sight of the decorations on the altar and the copes and stoles of the officiating ministers, or are in full view of the same. But then humble Christians in fashionable attire are rare; and the old difficulty about the camel and the needle's eye, remains.

Again, in the manner of following the services you see the oddest diversity among the strangers at church. The regular congregation has by this time got pretty well in step together, and stands up or sits down, speaks or keeps silence, with some kind of uniformity; even the older men having come to tolerate innovations which at first split the parish into factions. But the strangers, who have come from the north and from the south, from the east and from the west, have brought their own views and habits, and take a pride in making them manifest. Say that the service is only moderately High—that is, conducted with decency and solemnity but not going into extremes; your left-hand neighbour evidently belongs to one of the ultra-Ritualistic congregations, and disdains to conceal her affiliation. If she be a tall woman, and therefore conspicuous, her genuflexions are more profound than any other person's; and her sudden and automatic way of dropping on her knees, and then getting up again as if she were worked by wires, attracts the attention of all about her. She crosses herself at various times; and ostentatiously forbears to use her book save at certain congregational passages. She regards the service as an act of priestly sacrifice and mediation, and her own attitude therefore is one of acceptance, not participation.

Your neighbour on your right is a sturdy Low Churchman, who sticks to the ways of his father and flings hard names at the new system. He makes his protest against what he calls 'all this mummery' visibly, if not audibly. He sits like a rock during the occasional intervals when modern congregations rise; and he reads his Prayer-book with unshaken fidelity from first to last, making the responses, which are intoned by the choir and the bulk of the congregation, in a loud and level voice, and even muttering sotto voce the clergyman's part after him. In the creed, when the Ritualistic lady bends both her knees and almost touches the ground, he simply bobs his head, as if saluting Robinson or Jones; and during the doxology, where she repeats the obeisance, and looks as if she were speaking confidentially to the matting, he holds up his chin and stares about him. She, the pronounced Ritualist, knows all the hymns by heart and joins in them like one well accustomed; but he, the Evangelist, stumbles over the lines, with his pince-nez slipping off his nose, satisfied if he catches a word here and there so as to know something of his whereabouts. She sings correctly all through; but he can do no more than put in a fancy note on occasions, and perhaps come in with a flourish at the end. There are many such songsters at church who think they have done all that can be demanded of them in the way of congregational harmony if they hit the last two notes fairly, and join the pack at the Amen.

Sometimes the old-fashioned worshippers get put into the front row, and there, without prayer-stool or chair-back against which to steady themselves, find kneeling an impossibility; so they either sit with their elbows on their knees, or betray associations with square pews and comfortable corners at home, by turning their backs to the altar, and burying their faces in their rush-bottomed seats. The Ritualist would have knelt as straight as an arrow and without quivering once all through.

People are generally supposed to go to church for devotion, but, if they do, devotion and vanity are twin sisters. Look at the number of pretty hands which find it absolutely necessary to take off their gloves, and which are always wandering up to the face in becoming gestures and with the right curve. Or, if the hands are only mediocre, the rings are handsome; and diamonds sparkle as well in a church as anywhere else. And though one vows to renounce the lusts of the world as well as of the flesh, there is no use in having diamonds if one's neighbours don't see them. Look too, at the pretty faces which know so well the effect produced by a little paint and powder beneath a softening mask of thin white lace. Is this their best confession of sin? And again, those elaborate toilets in which women come to pray for forgiveness and humility; are they for the honour of God? It strikes us that the honour of God has very little to do with that formidable, and may be unpaid, milliner's bill, but the admiration of men and the envy of other women a great deal. The Pope is wise to make all ladies go to his religious festivals without bonnets and in rigid black. It narrows the margin of coquetry somewhat, if it does not

altogether remove it. But dress ever was, and ever will be, as webs spread in the way of woman's righteousness; and we have no doubt that Eve frilled her apron of fig-leaves before she had worn it a day.

All sorts of characters throng these strangers' seats; and some are typical. There are the men of low stature and awkward bearing, with stubbly chins, who stand in constrained positions and wear no gloves. They look like grooms; they may be clerks; but they are the men on whom Punch has had his eye for many years now, when he portrays the British snob and diversifies him with the more modern cad. Then there are the well-dressed, well set-up gentlemen of military appearance, who carry their umbrellas under their arms as if they were swords, and are evidently accustomed to have their own will and command other people's; and the men who look like portraits of Montague Tigg, in cheap kid gloves and suspicious jewelry, who pray into their hats, or make believe to pray, while their bold eyes rove all about, fixing themselves most pertinaciously on the old lady with the diamonds and the giggling young ones with the paint. There is the bride in a white bonnet and light silk dress, who carries an ivory-backed Church Service with the most transparent attempts at unconsciousness, and the bridegroom who lounges after her and looks sheepish; sometimes it is the bride who straggles bashfully, and the groom who boldly leads the way. There is the young widow with new weeds; the sedate mother of many daughters; paterfamilias, with his numerous olive-branches, leading on his arm the exuberant wife of his bosom flushed with coming up the hill; the walking tourist, whose respect for Sunday goes to the length of a clean collar and a clothes-brush; and the female traveller, economical of luggage, who wears her waterproof and sea-side hat, and is independent and not ashamed. There are the people who come for simple distraction, because Sunday is such a dull day in a strange place, and there is nothing else to do; and those who come because it is respectable and the right thing, and they are accustomed to it; those who come to see and be seen; and those—the select few, the simple yearning souls—who come because they do honestly feel the church to be the very House of God, and that prayer with its confession of sin helps them to live better lives. But, good or bad, vain or simple, arrogant or humble, they all sweep out when the last word is said, and the cottagers and small townsfolk stand at their doors to see them pass—'the quality coming out of church' counting as their Sunday sight. The women get ideas in millinery from the show, and discuss with each other what is worn this year, and how ever can they turn their old gowns into garments that shall imitate the last effort of a Court milliner's genius—the result of many sleepless nights? Fine ladies ridicule these clumsy apings of their humble sisters, and long for the old sumptuary laws to be in force on all below them; but if Sunday is the field-day and church the parade-ground of the strangers, we cannot wonder if the natives try to participate in the amusement. If Lady Jane likes to confess her shame and humiliation on a velvet cushion and in silk attire, can we reasonably blame Joan that her

soul hankers after a hassock of felt, and a penance-sheet of homespun cut according to my lady's pattern?

ESSAYS UPON SOCIAL SUBJECTS BOOK SECOND BY ELIZA LYNN LINTON

IN SICKNESS.

Life not being holiday-making throughout, we have to allow for the bad half-hours that must come to us; and, if we are wise, we make provision to pass them with as little annoyance as possible. And of all the bad half-hours to which we are destined, those to be spent in sickness need the greatest amount of care to render them endurable. Without going to the length of Michelet's favourite theory, which sees in every woman nothing but an invalid more or less severely afflicted according to individual temperament, but always under the influence of diseased nerves and controlled by sickly fancies, there is no doubt that women suffer very much more than men; while their patience under physical ailments is one of the traditional graces with which they are credited. Where men fume and fret at the interruption to their lives brought about by a fit of illness, calculating anxiously the loss they are sustaining during the forced inaction of their convalescence, women submit resignedly, and make the best of the inevitable. With that clear sense of Fate characteristic of them, they do not fight against the evil which they know has to be borne, but wisely try to lighten it by such wiles and arts as are open to them, and set themselves to adorn the cross they must endure. One thing indeed, makes invalidism less terrible to them than to men; and that is their ability to perform their home duties, if not quite as efficiently as when they are up and about, yet well enough for all practical purposes in the conduct of the family. The woman who gives her mind to it can keep her house in smooth working gear by dictation from her sick couch; and what she cannot actively overlook she can arrange. So far this removes the main cause of irritation with which the man must battle in the best way he can, when his business comes to a stand-still; or is given up into the hands of but a makeshift kind of substitute taken at the best; while he is laid on his back undergoing many things from doctors for the good of science and the final settling of doubtful pathological points.

Another reason why women are more patient than men during sickness is that they can amuse themselves better. One gets tired of reading all day long with the aching eyes and weary brain of weakness; yet how few things a man can do to amuse himself without too great an effort, and without being dependent on others! But women have a thousand pretty little devices for whiling away the heavy hours. They can vary their finger-work almost infinitely, and they find real pleasure in a new stitch or a stripe of a different colour and design from the last. In the contempt in which needlework in all its forms is held by the advanced class of women, its use during the period of convalescence, when it helps the lagging time as nothing else can, is forgotten. Yet it is no bad wisdom to remember that the day of sickness will probably come some time to us all; and to lay in stores of potential interest and cheerfulness against that day is a not unworthy use of

power. Certain it is that this greater diversity of small, unexciting, unfatiguing occupations enables women to bear a tedious illness with comparative patience, and helps to keep them more cheerful than men.

But when the time shall have come for the perfect development of the androgynous creature, who is as yet only in the pupal state of her existence, women will have lost these two great helps. Workers outside the home like their husbands and brothers, like them they will fume and fret when they are prevented from following their bread-winning avocations; calculations of the actual money loss they are sustaining coming in to aggravate their bodily pains. And, as the needle is looked on as one of the many symbols of feminine degradation, in the good time coming there will be none of that pretty trifling with silks and ribbons which may be very absurd by the side of important work, but which is invaluable as an invalid's pastime. Consequently, what with the anguish of knowing that her profession is neglected, and what with the unenlivened tedium of her days, sickness will be a formidable thing to women of the androgynous type—and to the men belonging to them.

Again, care and tact are required to rob sickness of its more painful features, and to render it not too distressing to the home companions. A real woman, with her instincts properly developed—among them the instinct of admiration—knows how to render even invalidism beautiful; and indeed, with her power of improving occasions, she is never more charming than as an invalid or a convalescent. There is a certain refined beauty about her more seductive than the robuster bloom of health. Her whole being seems purified. The coarser elements of humanity are obscured, passions are at rest, and all those fretful, anxious strivings, which probably afflict her when in the full swing of society, are put away as if they had never been. She is forced to let life glide, and her own mind follows the course of the quieter flow. She knows too how to make herself bewitching by the art which is not artifice so much as the highest point to which her natural excellences can be brought. If the radiance of health has gone, she has the sweeter, subtler loveliness of fragility; if her diamonds are laid aside, and all that glory of dress which does so much for women is perforce abandoned, the long, loose folds of falling drapery, with their antique grace, perhaps suit her better, and the fresh flowers on her table may be more suggestive and delightful than artificial ones in her hair.

Many a drifting husband has been brought back to his first enthusiasm by the illness of a wife who knew how to turn evil things into good, and to extract a charm even out of suffering. It is a turn of the kaleidoscope; a recombination of the same elements but in a new pattern and with fresh loveliness; whereas the androgynous woman, with her business worries and her honest, if impolitic, self-surrender to hideous flannel wraps and all the uglinesses of a sick room crudely pronounced, would have added a terror to disease which probably would have quenched his waning love for ever. For the

androgynous woman despises every approach to coquetry, as she despises all the other insignia of feminine servitude. It is not part of her life's duties to make herself pleasing to men; and they must take her as they find her. Where the true woman contrives a beauty and creates a grace out of her very misfortune, the androgynous holds to the doctrine of spades and the value of the unvarnished truth. Where the one gives a little thought to the most becoming colour of her ribbon or the best arrangement of her draperies, the other pushes the tangled locks off her face anyhow, and makes herself an amorphous bundle of brown and lemon colour. Her sole wish is to get the bad time over. How it would be best got over does not trouble her; and to beautify the inherently unlovely is beyond her skill to compass. Hence her hours of sickness go by in ugliness and idle fretting; while the true woman finds graceful work to do that enlivens their monotony, and in the continuance of her home duties loses the galling sense of loss from which the other suffers.

In sickness too, who but women can nurse? Men make good nurses enough out in the bush, where nothing better can be had; and a Californian 'pardner' is tender enough in his uncouth way to his mate stricken down with fever in the shanty, when he comes in at meal-times and administers quinine and brick tea with horny hands bleeding from cuts and begrimed with mud. But this is not nursing in the woman's sense. To be sure the strength of men makes them often of value about an invalid. They can lift and carry as women cannot; and the want of a few nights' sleep does not make them hysterical. Still they are nowhere as nurses, compared with women; and the best of them are not up to the thoughtful cares and pleasant attentions which, as medical men know, are half the battle in recovery. And this is work which suits women. It appeals to their love of power and tenderness combined; it gratifies the maternal instinct of protection and self-sacrifice; and it pleasantly reverses the usual order of things, and gives into their hands Hercules twirling a distaff the wrong way, and fettered by the length of his skirts.

The bread-winning wife knows nothing of all this. To her, sickness in her household would be only a degree less destructive than her own disablement, if she were called on to nurse. She would not be able to leave her office for such unremunerative employment as soothing her children's feverish hours or helping her husband over his. She would calculate, naturally enough, the difference of cost between hired help and her own earnings; and economy as well as inclination would decide the question. But the poor fellow left all day long to the questionable services of a hired nurse, or to the clumsy honesty of some domestic Phyllis less deft than faithful, would be a gainer by his wife's presence—granting that she was a real woman and not an androgyne—even if he lost the addition to their income which her work might bring in; as he would rather, when he came home from his work to her sick bed, find her patient and cheerful, making the best of things from the woman's point of view and with the woman's power of adaptation, than be met with anxious queries as to the progress of business; with doubts, fears,

perplexities; the office dragged into the sick room, and unnecessary annoyance added to unavoidable pain.

There is a certain kind of woman, sweet always, who yet shows best when she is invalided. Cleared for a while from the social tangles which perplex and distress the sensitive, she is as if floated into a quiet corner where she has time to think and leisure to be her true self undisturbed; where she is able too, to give more to her friends, if less to the world at large than at other times. And she is always to be found. The invalid-couch is the rallying point of the household, and even the little children learn to regard it as a place of privilege dearer than the stately drawing-room of ordinary times. Her friends drop in, sure to find her at home and pleased by their coming; and her afternoon teas with her half-dozen chosen intimates have a character of their own, æsthetic and delightful; partly owing to the quiet and subdued tone that must perforce pervade them, partly to the unselfishness that reigns on all sides. Every one exerts himself to bring her things which may amuse her, and she is loaded with presents of a graceful kind—new books, early fruit, and a wealth of flowers to which even her poorest friend adds his bunch of violets, if nothing else. She is the precious child of her circle, and but for her innate sweetness would run a risk of being the spoilt one. Clever men come and talk to her, give her cause of thought, and knowledge to remember and be made glad by for all time; her lady friends keep her abreast of the outside doings of the world and their own especial coteries, contributing the dramatic element so dear to the feminine mind; every one tells her all that is afloat on the sea of society, but only all that is cheerful—no one brings her horrors, nor disturbs the frail grace of her repose with petty jealousies and tempers. Her atmosphere is pure and serene, and the dainty loveliness of her surroundings lends its charm to the rest.

To her husband she is even more beautiful than in the early days; and all men feel for her that chivalrous kind of tenderness and homage which the true woman alone excites. The womanly invalid, gentle, cheerful, full of interest for others, active in mind if prostrate in body, sympathetic and patient, is for the time the queen of her circle, loved and ministered to by all; and when she goes to Cannes or San Remo to escape the cruelty of the English winter, she carries with her a freight of good wishes and regrets, and leaves a blank which nothing can fill up until she returns with the summer roses to take her place once more as the popular woman of her society.

ESSAYS UPON SOCIAL SUBJECTS BOOK SECOND BY ELIZA LYNN LINTON

ON A VISIT.

To most young people the social arrangement known as going on a visit to friends at a distance is one of the most charming things possible. Novelty being to them the very breath of life, and hope and expectation their normal mental condition, the mere fact of change is in itself delightful; unless it happens to be something so hopelessly dull as a visit single-handed to an invalid grandmother, or the yearly probation of a girl of the period, when obliged to put herself under the charge of a wealthy maiden aunt with strict principles and no games of any kind allowed on the lawn. If the young ladies out on a visit are however, moderately cheerful, they can contrive to make amusement for themselves out of anything short of such sober-tinted extremes as these; and very often they effect more serious matters than mere amusement, and their visit brings them a love-affair or a marriage which changes the whole tenor of their lives. At the worst, it has shown them a new part of the country; given them new patterns of embroidery; new fashions of hairdressing; new songs and waltzes; and afforded an occasion for a large supply of pretty dresses—which last to most young women, or indeed to most women whether young or old, is a very effectual source of pleasure.

The great charm and excitement of going on a visit belongs naturally to the young of the middle classes; among those of higher condition it is a different matter altogether. When people take their own servants with them and live in exactly the same style as at home, they merely change the furniture of their rooms and the view from the windows. The same kind of thing goes on at Lord A.'s as at Lord B.'s, in the Scottish Highlands or the Leicestershire wolds. The quality of the hunting or shooting may be different, but the whole manner of living is essentially repetition; and the dead level of civilization is not broken up by any very startling innovations anywhere. But among the middle classes there is greater variety; and the country clergyman's daughter who goes on a visit to the London barrister's family, plunges into a manner of life totally different from that of her own home; the personal habits of town and country still remaining quite distinct, and the possibilities of action being on two different plans altogether.

A London-bred woman goes down to the country on a visit to a hale, hearty Hessian, her former school-fellow, who tucks up her woollen gown midway to her knees, wears stout boots of masculine appearance, and goes quite comfortably through mud and mire, across ploughed field and undrained farmyards—taking cramped stiles and five-barred gates in her way as obstacles of no more moment than was the mud or the mire. Long years of use to this unfastidious mode of existence have blinded her to the perception that a woman, without being an invalid, may yet be unable to do all that is so easy to her.

So the London lady is taken for a walk, say of five or six miles, which to the vigorous Hessian is a mere unsatisfying stroll, to be counted no more as serious exercise than she would count a spoonful of vol-au-vent as serious eating. To be sure the walk includes a few muddy corners and the like, and Bond Street boots do not bear the strain of stiff clay clods too well; neither is a new gown of the fashionable colour improved by being dragged through furze bushes and bracken, and brushed against the wet heads of field cabbages. Moreover, crossing meadows tenanted by cattle that toss their heads and look—and looking, in horned cattle, is a great offence to our town-bred woman—is a service of peril which alone would take all the strength out of her nerves, and all the pleasure out of her walk; but the hostess cannot imagine feelings which she herself does not share, and the London lady is of course credited with courage, because to doubt it would be to cast a slur on her whole moral character. The Hessian minds the beasts no more than so many tree-stumps, but her friend sees a raging bull in every milky mother that stares at her as she passes, and thinks something dreadful is going to happen because the flies make the heifers swish their tails and stamp. Then the dogs bark furiously as they rush out of farmsteads and cottages; and the newly dressed fields are not pleasant to cross nor skirt. The visitor cares little for wild flowers, less for birds, and all trees are pretty much alike to her; and this long rude walk, accentuated with the true country emphasis, has been too much for her. Her host wonders at her evening lassitude and low spirits, and fears that she finds it dull; and the robust hostess anathematizes the demoralizing effects of Kensington, and scornfully contrasts her present friend with her past, when they were both schoolgirls together and on a par in strength and endurance. 'She was like other people then,' says the well-trained Hessian who has kept herself in condition by daily exercise of a severe character; 'and now see what a poor creature she is! She can do nothing but work at embroidery and crouch shivering over the fire.'

Sometimes however, it happens the other way, and the lady guest, even though a Londoner, is the stronger of the two. The wife has been broken down by family cares and the one inevitable child too many; the guest comes fresh, unworn, unmarried, still young. The wife seldom goes beyond the garden, never further than the village, and is knocked up if she has done two miles; the guest can manage her six or eight without fatigue. Hence she naturally becomes the husband's walking companion during her visit, to his frank delight and as frank regrets that his wife cannot do as much. And the wife, though good-breeding and natural kindness prevent her objecting to these long walks, finds them hard lines all things considered. Most probably she bitterly regrets having invited her former friend, and mentally resolves never to ask her again. She wanted her as a little amusement and relaxation for herself. Her health is delicate and her life dull, and she thought a female friend in the house would cheer her up and be a help. But when she finds that she has invited one who, without in the least intending it and only by the force of circumstances, sets her in unfavourable contrast with her husband, we may be sure that it will not take much argument to convince her that asking friends on a

visit is a ridiculous custom, and that people, especially young ladies fond of long walks, are best at their own homes.

In London there are two kinds of guests from the country; the insatiable, and the indifferent—those who wear out their hosts by their activity and those who oppress them by their supineness. The Londoner who has outlived all the excitement of the busy city life wonders at the energy and enthusiasm of his friend. Everything must be done, even to the Tower and the Whispering Gallery, Madame Tussaud's and the Agricultural Hall. There is not a second-rate trumpery trifle which has been in the shop windows for a year or more, that is not pored over, and if possible, bought; and among the inflictions of the host may be counted the crude taste of the guest, and the childish flinging away of money on things absolutely worthless. Or it may be that the guest has come up stored with many maxims of worldly wisdom and vague suspicion, and, determined not to be taken in, attempts to bargain in shops where a second price would be impossible, and where the host is personally known.

With guests of superabundant energy a quiet evening is out of the question. They go the round of all the theatres, and fill in the gaps with the opera and concerts. They have come up not to stay with you, but to see London; and they fulfil their intention liberally. Or they are indifferent and supine, and not to be amused, do what you will. They think everything a bore, or they are nervous and not up to the mark. They beseech you not to ask any one to dinner, and not to take them with you to any reception. They are listless at the theatre and go to sleep at the opera. At the Royal Academy the only pictures they notice are those landscapes taken from their own neighbourhood, or perhaps one by a local artist known to them. All the finest works of the year fall flat; and before you have seen half the exhibition, they say they have had enough of it, and sit down, plaintively offering to wait till you have done, in the tone of a Christian martyr.

These are the people who are always complaining of the dirt and smoke of London and the stuffiness of the houses, as if they were personally injured and you personally responsible. They show a very decided scorn for all London produce, natural or artificial, and wonder how people can live in such a place. They are sure to deride the prevailing fashions, whatever they may be; while their own, of last season, are exaggerated and excessive; but they refuse to have the town touch laid on them during their stay, and heroically follow the millinery gospel of their local Worth, and measure you by themselves. They show real animation only when they are going away, and begin to wonder how they shall find things at home, and whether Charles will meet them at the station or send William instead. But when they write to thank you for your hospitality, they tell you they never enjoyed anything so much in their lives; leaving you in a state of perplexity, as you remember their boredom, and peevish complainings, and evident relief in leaving, and compare your remembrance with the warm expressions of

pleasure now before your eyes. All you can say is, that if they were pleased they took an odd way of showing it.

There are people rash enough to have other people's children on a visit; to take on themselves the responsibility of their health and safety, when the young guests are almost sure to fall ill by the change of diet and the unwonted amount of indulgence allowed, or to come into some trouble by the relaxing of due supervision and control. They get a touch of gastric fever, or they tumble into the pond; and either bronchitis, or a fall from horseback, toppling over from a ladder, or coming to grief on the swing, or some such accident, is generally the result of an act which is either heroism or madness as one may be inclined to regard it. For of all the inconveniences attending visiting, those incidental to child-guests are the most distressing. Yet there are philanthropic friends who run these risks for the sake of giving pleasure to a few young people. Whether they deserve canonization for their kindness or censure for their rashness we leave an open question.

As for a certain disturbance in health, that generally comes to other than children from being on a visit. Hours and style of food are sure to be somewhat different from those of home; and the slight constraint of the life, and the feverishness which this induces, add to the disturbance. Occupations are interrupted both to the guest and the host; and some hosts think it necessary to make company for the guest, and some guests are heavy on hand. Some regard your house as a gaol and you as the gaoler, and are afraid to initiate an independent action or to call their souls their own; others treat you as a landlord, and behave as if you kept an inn, making a convenience of your household in the most unblushing manner. Some are fastidious, and covertly snub your wines, your table, and your whole arrangements; others embarrass you by the fervour of their admiration, as if they had come out of a hovel and did not know the usages of civilized homes. Some intrude themselves into every small household matter that goes on before them, and offer advice that is neither wanted nor desired; and others will not commit themselves to the most innocent opinion, fearful lest they should be thought to interfere or take sides. Some of the women dress at the husband; some of the men flirt with the wife or make love to the daughters surreptitiously; some loaf about or play billiards all day long till you are tired of the sound of their footsteps and the click of the balls; other bury their heads in a book and are no better than mummies lounging back in easy chairs; some insist on going to the meet in a hard frost; others will shoot in a downpour; and others again waste your whole day over the chess-table, and will not stir out at all. Some are so sensitive and fidgety that they will not stay above a day or two, and are gone before you have got into the habit of seeing them, leaving you with the feeling of a whirlwind having passed through your house; and others, when they come, stick, and you begin to despair of dislodging them.

On the other hand, there are houses where you feel that you would wear out your welcome after the third day, how long soever the distance you have come; and there are others where you would offend your hosts for life if you did not throw overboard every other duty and engagement to remain for as many weeks as they desire. In fact, paying visits and inviting guests are both risky matters, and need far more careful consideration than they generally receive. But when it happens that the thing is congenial on both sides, that the guest slips into a vacant place as it were, and neither bores nor is bored, then paying a visit is as delightful as the young imagination pictures it to be; and the peculiar closeness and sweetness of intimacy it engenders is one of the most enduring and charming circumstances incidental to friendship. This however, is rare and exceptional; as are most of the very good things of life.

ESSAYS UPON SOCIAL SUBJECTS BOOK SECOND BY ELIZA LYNN LINTON

DRAWING-ROOM EPIPHYTES.

In every coterie we find certain stray damsels unattached; young ladies of personable appearance and showy accomplishments who go about the world alone, and whose parents, never seen, are living in some obscure lodgings where they pinch and screw to furnish their daughter's bravery. Some one or two great ladies of the set patronize these girls, take them about a good deal, and ask them to all their drums and at-homes. They are useful in their degree; very good-natured; always ready to fetch and carry in a confidential kind of way; to sing and play when they are asked—and they sing and play with almost professional skill; full of the small talk of the day, and not likely to bore their companions with untimely discussions on dangerous subjects, nor to startle them with enthusiasm about anything. They serve to fill a vacant place when wanted; and they look nice and keep up the ball so far as their own sphere extends. They are safe, too; and, though lively and amusing, are never known to retail gossip nor talk scandal in public.

Who are they? No one exactly knows. They are Miss A. and Miss B., and they have collaterals of respectable name and standing; cousins in Government offices; dead uncles of good military rank; perhaps a father, dead or alive, with a quite unexceptionable position; but you never see them with their natural belongings, and no one thinks of visiting them at their own homes. They are sure to have a mother in bad health, who never goes out and never sees any one; and if you should by chance come across her, you find a shabby, painful, peevish woman who seems at odds with life altogether, and who is as unlike her showy daughter as a russet wren is unlike a humming-bird. The drawing-room epiphyte introduces mamma, when necessary, with a creditable effort at indifference, not to say content, with her conditions; but if you can read signs, you know what she is feeling about that suit of rusty black, and how little she enjoys the rencounter.

Sometimes she has a brother, of whom she never speaks unless obliged, and of whose occupation and whereabouts, when asked, she gives only the vaguest account. He has an office in the City; or he has gone abroad; or he is in the navy and she forgets the name of his ship; but, whatever he is, you can get no clue more distinct than this. If you should chance to see him, you get a greater surprise than you had when you met the mother; and you wonder, with a deeper wonder, how such a sister should have sprung from the same stock as that which produced such a brother. Sometimes however, the brother is as presentable as the sister; in which case he probably follows much the same course as herself, and hangs on to the skirts of those of the Upper Ten who recognize him—

preferring to idle away his life and energy as a well-dressed epiphyte of greatness rather than live the life of a man in a lower social sphere. But, as a rule, stray damsels have neither brothers nor sisters visible to the world, and only a widowed mother in the background, whose health is bad and who does not go out.

The ulterior object of the ladies who patronize these pretty epiphytes is to get them married; partly from personal kindness, partly from the pleasure all women have in bringing about a marriage that does not interfere with themselves. But they seldom accomplish this object. Who is to marry the epiphyte? The men of the society into which she has been brought from the outside have their own ambitions to realize. They want money, or land, or a good family connexion, to make the sacrifice an equal bargain and to gild the yoke of matrimony with becoming splendour. And the drawing room epiphyte has nothing to offer as her contribution but a fine pair of eyes, a good-natured manner, and a pretty taste for music. To marry well among the society in which she finds herself is therefore almost impossible. And her tastes have been so far formed as to render a marriage into lower circumstances almost as impossible on the other side.

Besides, what could she do as the wife of a clergyman, say on three hundred a year, with a poor parish to look after and an increasing tribe of babies to feed and clothe? Her clear high notes, her splendid register, her brilliant touch, will not help her then; and the taste with which she makes up half-worn silk gowns, and transforms what was a rag into an ornament, will not do much towards finding the necessary boots and loaves which keep her sisters awake at night wondering how they are to be got. She has been taught nothing of the art of home life, if she has learnt much of that of the drawing-room. She cannot cook, nor make a little go a long way by the cunning of good management and a well-masked economy; she cannot do serviceable needlework, though she may be great in fancy work, and quite a genius in millinery; and the habit of having plenty of servants about her has destroyed the habit of turning her hand to anything like energetic self-help. Epiphyte as she is, penniless stray damsel more than half maintained by the kindness of her grand friends, she has to keep up the sham of appearances before those friends' domestics. And as ladyhood in England is chiefly measured by a woman's uselessness, and to do anything in the way of rational work would be a spot on her ermine, the poor epiphyte of the drawing-room, with mamma in rusty black in those shabby lodgings of theirs, learns in self-defence to practise all the foolish helplessness of her superiors; and, to retain the respect of the servants, loses her own.

What is she then but one of those misplaced beings who are neither of one sphere nor of another? She is not of the grandes dames on her own account, yet she lives in their houses as one among them. She is not a woman who can make the best of things; who, notable and industrious, and by her clever contrivances of saving and substitution is able to order a home comfortably on next to nothing; and yet she has no solid claim to

anything but the undercut of the middle classes, and no right to expect more than the most ordinary marriage. She is nothing. Ashamed and unable to work, she has to accept gratuities which are not wages. Waiting on Providence and floated by her friends, she wanders though society ever on the look-out for chances. Each new acquaintance is a fresh hope, and every house that opens to her contains the potentiality of final success. To be met everywhere is the ultimate point of her ambition with respect to means; the end kept steadily, if fruitlessly, in view, is that satisfying settlement which shall take her out of the category of a hanger-on and give her a locus standi of her own. But it does not come.

Year by year we meet the drawing-room epiphyte in the old haunts—at Brighton; at Ryde; at half-a-dozen good houses in London; on a visit to the friends who make much of her one day and snub her the next—but she does not 'go off.' She is pretty, she is agreeable, she is well dressed, she is accomplished; but she does not find the husband for whom all this is offered as the equivalent. Year by year she grows fatter or thinner as her constitution expands into obesity or shrivels into leanness; the lines about her fine eyes deepen; the powder is a little thicker on her cheeks; and there are more than shrewd suspicions of a touch of rouge or of antimony, with a judicious application of patent hair-restorer to lift up the faded tints. Fighting desperately with that old enemy Time, she disputes line by line the tribute he claims; and succeeds so far as to continue a good make-up for a year or two after other women of her own age have given in and consented to look their years. But the drawing-room epiphyte is nothing if she is not young—which is synonymous with power to interest and amuse. Her friends, the great ladies who hold drawing-rooms and gather society in shoals, want points of colour in their rooms as well as serviceable foils. The apple-pie that was all made of quinces was a failure, wanting the homely couche from which the savour of the more fragrant fruit might be thrown up. On the other hand there are social meetings which are like apple-pies without any quince at all; and then the epiphyte is invaluable, and her music worth as much in its degree as if she were a prima donna, each of whose notes ranked as gold. So that when she ceases to be young, when she loses her high notes and has gout in her fingers, she fails in her only raison d'être, and her occupation is gone. Hence her hard struggles with the old enemy, and her half-heroic, half-tragic determination not to give in while a shred of force remains.

On the day when she collapses into an old woman she is lost. She has nothing for it then but to withdraw from the brilliant drawing-rooms she has so long haunted into dingy lodgings in a back street, and live as her mother lived before her. Forgotten by the world which she has spent her life in waiting on, she has leisure to reflect on the relative values of things, and to lament, as she probably will, that she gave living grain for gilded husks; that she exchanged the realities of love and home, which might have been hers had she been contented to accept them on a lower social scale, for the barren pleasures of the

day and the delusive hope of marrying well in a sphere where she had no solid foothold. She had her choice, like others; but she chose to throw for high stakes at heavy odds, and in so doing let slip what she originally held. The bird in the hand might have been of a homely kind enough; still, it was always the bird; while the two golden pheasants in the bush flew away unsalted, and left her only their shadows to run after.

On the whole then, we incline to the belief that the drawing-room epiphyte is a mistake, and that those stray damsels who wander about society unattended by any natural protector and always more or less in the character of adventuresses, would do better to keep to the sphere determined by parental circumstances than to let themselves be taken into one which does not belong to them and which they cannot hold. And furthermore it seems to us that, irrespective of its present instability and future fruitlessness, the position of a drawing-room epiphyte is one which no woman of sense would accept, and to which no woman of spirit would submit.


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