THE GIRL OF THE PERIOD AND OTHER SOCIAL ESSAYS VOL.I

BY

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Freeditorial

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THE GIRL OF THE PERIOD

Time was when the phrase, 'a fair young English girl,' meant the ideal of womanhood; to us, at least, of home birth and breeding. It meant a creature generous, capable, modest; something franker than a Frenchwoman, more to be trusted than an Italian, as brave as an American but more refined, as domestic as a German and more graceful. It meant a girl who could be trusted alone if need be, because of the innate purity and dignity of her nature, but who was neither bold in bearing nor masculine in mind; a girl who, when she married, would be her husband's friend and companion, but never his rival; one who would consider his interests as identical with her own, and not hold him as just so much fair game for spoil; who would make his house his true home and place of rest, not a mere passage-place for vanity and ostentation to pass through; a tender mother, an industrious housekeeper, a judicious mistress.

We prided ourselves as a nation on our women. We thought we had the pick of creation in this fair young English girl of ours, and envied no other men their own. We admired the languid grace and subtle fire of the South; the docility and childlike affectionateness of the East seemed to us sweet and simple and restful; the vivacious sparkle of the trim and sprightly Parisienne was a pleasant little excitement when we met with it in its own domain; but our allegiance never wandered from our brown-haired girls at home, and our hearts were less vagrant than our fancies. This was in the old time, and when English girls were content to be what God and nature had made them. Of late years we have changed the pattern, and have given to the world a race of women as utterly unlike the old insular ideal as if we had created another nation altogether. The Girl of the Period, and the fair young English girl of the past, have nothing in common save ancestry and their mother-tongue; and even of this last the modern version makes almost a new language, through the copious additions it has received from the current slang of the day.

The Girl of the Period is a creature who dyes her hair and paints her face, as the first articles of her personal religion—a creature whose sole idea of life is fun; whose sole aim is unbounded luxury; and whose dress is the chief object of such thought and intellect as she possesses. Her main endeavour is to outvie her neighbours in the extravagance of fashion. No matter if, in the time of crinolines, she sacrifices decency; in the time of trains, cleanliness; in the time of tied-back skirts, modesty; no matter either, if she makes herself a nuisance and an inconvenience to every one she meets;—the Girl of the Period has done away with such moral muffishness as consideration for others, or regard for counsel and rebuke. It was all very well in old-fashioned times, when fathers

and mothers had some authority and were treated with respect, to be tutored and made to obey, but she is far too fast and flourishing to be stopped in mid-career by these slow old morals; and as she lives to please herself, she does not care if she displeases every one else.

Nothing is too extraordinary and nothing too exaggerated for her vitiated taste; and things which in themselves would be useful reforms if let alone become monstrosities worse than those which they have displaced so soon as she begins to manipulate and improve. If a sensible fashion lifts the gown out of the mud, she raises hers midway to her knee. If the absurd structure of wire and buckram, once called a bonnet, is modified to something that shall protect the wearer's face without putting out the eyes of her companion, she cuts hers down to four straws and a rosebud, or a tag of lace and a bunch of glass beads. If there is a reaction against an excess of Rowland's Macassar, and hair shiny and sticky with grease is thought less nice than if left clean and healthily crisp, she dries and frizzes and sticks hers out on end like certain savages in Africa, or lets it wander down her back like Madge Wildfire's, and thinks herself all the more beautiful the nearer she approaches in look to a negress or a maniac.

With purity of taste she has lost also that far more precious purity and delicacy of perception which sometimes mean more than appears on the surface. What the demi-monde does in its frantic efforts to excite attention, she also does in imitation. If some fashionable dévergondée en évidence is reported to have come out with her dress below her shoulder-blades, and a gold strap for all the sleeve thought necessary, the Girl of the Period follows suit next day; and then she wonders that men sometimes mistake her for her prototype, or that mothers of girls not quite so far gone as herself refuse her as a companion for their daughters. She has blunted the fine edges of feeling so much that she cannot understand why she should be condemned for an imitation of form which does not include imitation of fact. She cannot be made to see that modesty of appearance and virtue in deed ought to be inseparable; and that no good girl can afford to appear bad, under pain of receiving the contempt awarded to the bad.

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

The Girl of the Period envies the queens of the demi-monde far more than she abhors them. She sees them gorgeously attired and sumptuously appointed, and she knows them to be flattered, fêted, and courted with a certain disdainful admiration of which she catches only the admiration while she ignores the disdain. They have all that for which her soul is hungering; and she never stops to reflect at what a price they have bought their gains, and what fearful moral penalties they pay for their sensuous pleasures. She sees only the coarse gilding on the base token, and shuts her eyes to the hideous figure in the midst and the foul legend written round the edge. It is this envy of the pleasures, and indifference to the sins, of these women of the demi-monde which is doing such infinite mischief to the modern girl. They brush too closely by each other, if not in actual deeds, yet in aims and feelings; for the luxury which is bought by vice with the one is that thing of all in life most passionately desired by the other, though she is not yet prepared to pay quite the same price. Unfortunately, she has already paid too much—all that once gave her distinctive national character.

No one can say of the modern English girl that she is tender, loving, retiring or domestic. The old fault so often found by keen-sighted Frenchwomen, that she was so fatally romanesque, so prone to sacrifice appearances and social advantages for love, will never be set against the Girl of the Period. Love indeed is the last thing she thinks of, and the least of the dangers besetting her. Love in a cottage—that seductive dream which used to vex the heart and disturb the calculations of the prudent mother—is now a myth of past ages. The legal barter of herself for so much money, representing so much dash, so much luxury and pleasure—that is her idea of marriage; the only idea worth entertaining. For all seriousness of thought respecting the duties or the consequences of marriage, she has not a trace. If children come, they find but a stepmother's cold welcome from her; and if her husband thinks that he has married anything that is to belong to him—a tacens et placens uxor pledged to make him happy—the sooner he wakes from his hallucination and understands that he has simply married some one who will condescend to spend his money on herself, and who will shelter her indiscretions behind the shield of his name, the less severe will be his disappointment. She has married his house, his carriage, his balance at the banker's, his title; and he himself is just the inevitable condition clogging the wheel of her fortune; at best an adjunct, to be tolerated with more or less patience as may chance. For it is only the old-fashioned sort, not Girls of the Period pur sang, who marry for love, or put the husband before the banker. But the Girl of the Period does not marry easily. Men are afraid of her; and with reason. They may amuse themselves with her for an evening, but they do not readily take her for life. Besides, after all her efforts, she is only a poor copy of the real thing; and the real thing is far more amusing than the copy, because it is real. Men can get that whenever they like; and when they go into their mothers' drawing-rooms, with their sisters and their sisters' friends, they want something of quite a different flavour.

Toujours perdrix is bad providing all the world over; but a continual weak imitation of toujours perdrix is worse.

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

It is terribly significant of the present state of things when men are free to write as they do of the women of their own nation. Every word of censure flung against them is two-edged, and wounds those who condemn as much as those who are condemned; for surely it need hardly be said that men hold nothing so dear as the honour of their women, and that no one living would willingly lower the repute of his mother or his sisters. It is only when these have placed themselves beyond the pale of masculine respect that such things could be written as are written now. When women become again what they were once they will gather round them the love and homage and chivalrous devotion which were then an Englishwoman's natural inheritance.

The marvel in the present fashion of life among women is, how it holds its ground in spite of the disapprobation of men. It used to be an old-time notion that the sexes were made for each other, and that it was only natural for them to please each other, and to set themselves out for that end. But the Girl of the Period does not please men. She pleases them as little as she elevates them; and how little she does that, the class of women she has taken as her models of itself testifies. All men whose opinion is worth having prefer the simple and genuine girl of the past, with her tender little ways and pretty bashful modesties, to this loud and rampant modernization, with her false red hair and painted skin, talking slang as glibly as a man, and by preference leading the conversation to doubtful subjects. She thinks she is piquante and exciting when she thus makes herself the bad copy of a worse original; and she will not see that though men laugh with her they do not respect her, though they flirt with her they do not marry her; she will not believe that she is not the kind of thing they want, and that she is acting against nature and her own interests when she disregards their advice and offends their taste. We do not understand how she makes out her account, viewing her life from any side; but all we can do is to wait patiently until the national madness has passed, and our women have come back again to the old English ideal, once the most beautiful, the most modest, the most essentially womanly in the world.

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MODERN MOTHERS.
I.

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

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

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

Part of this growing disinclination is due to the enormous expense incurred now by having children. As women have ceased to take any active share in their own housekeeping, whether in the kitchen or the nursery, the consequence is an additional cost for service, which is a serious item in the yearly accounts. Women who, if they lived a rational life, could and would nurse their children, now require a wet-nurse, or the services of an experienced woman who can 'bring up by hand,' as the phrase is; women who once would have had one nursemaid now have two; and women who, had they lived a generation ago, would have had none at all, must in their turn have a wretched young creature without thought or knowledge, into whose questionable care they deliver what should be the most sacred obligation and the most jealously-guarded charge they possess.

It is rare if, in any section of society where hired service can be had, mothers give more than a superficial personal superintendence to nursery or schoolroom—a superintendence about as thorough as their housekeeping, and as efficient. The one set of duties is quite as unfashionable as the other; and money is held to relieve from the service of love as entirely as it relieves from the need of labour. And yet, side by side with this personal relinquishment of natural duties, has grown up, perhaps as an instinctive compensation, an amount of expensive management specially remarkable. There never was a time when children were made of so much individual importance in the family, yet were in so little direct relation with the mother—never a time when maternity did so little and social organization so much. Juvenile parties; the kind of moral obligation apparently felt by all parents to provide heated and unhealthy amusements for their boys and girls during the holidays; extravagance in dress, following the same extravagance among the mothers; the increasing cost of education; the fuss and turmoil generally made over them—all render children real burdens in a house where money is not too plentiful, and where every child that comes is not only an additional mouth to feed and an additional body to clothe, but a subtractor by just so much from the family fund of pleasure. Even where there is no lack of money, the unavoidable restraints of the condition, for at least some months, more than counterbalance any sentimental delight to be found in maternity. For, before all other things in life, maternity demands unselfishness in women; and this is just the one virtue of which women have least at this present time—just the one reason why motherhood is at a discount, and children are regarded as inflictions instead of blessings.

Few middle-class women are content to bring up their children with the old-fashioned simplicity of former times, and to let them share and share alike in the family, with only so much difference in their treatment as is required by their difference of state; fewer still are willing to take on themselves the labour and care which must come with children in the easiest-going household, and so to save in the expenses by their own work. The shabbiest little wife, with her two financial ends always gaping and never

meeting, must have her still shabbier little drudge to wheel her perambulator, so as to give her an air of fine-ladyhood and being too good for such work; and the most indolent housekeeper, whose superintendence of domestic matters takes her just half an hour, cannot find time to go into the gardens or the square with nurse and the children, so that she may watch over them herself and see that they are properly cared for.

In France, where it is the fashion for mother and bonne to be together both out of doors and at home, at least the children are not neglected nor ill-treated, as is too often the case with us; and if they are improperly managed, according to our ideas, the fault is in the system, not in the want of maternal supervision. Here it is a very rare case indeed when the mother accompanies the nurse and children; and those days when she does are nursery gala-days to be talked of and remembered for weeks after. As the little ones grow older, she may occasionally take them with her when she visits her more intimate friends; but this is for her own pleasure, not their good; and going with them to see that they are properly cared for has nothing to do with the matter.

It is to be supposed that each mother has a profound belief in her own nurse, and that when she condemns the neglect and harshness shown to other children by the servants in charge, she makes a mental reservation in favour of her own, and is very sure that nothing improper nor cruel takes place in her nursery. Her children do not complain; and she always tells them to come to her when anything is amiss. On which negative evidence she satisfies her soul, and makes sure that all is right because she is too neglectful to see if anything is wrong. She does not remember that her children do not complain because they dare not. Dear and beautiful as all mammas are to the small fry in the nursery, they are always in a certain sense Junos sitting on the top of Mount Olympus, making occasional gracious and benign descents, but practically too far removed for useful interference; while nurse is an ever-present power, capable of sly pinches and secret raids, as well as of more open oppression—a power, therefore, to be propitiated, if only with the grim subservience of a Yezidi too much afraid of the Evil One to oppose him. Wherefore nurse is propitiated, failing the protection of the glorified creature just gone to her grand dinner in a cloud of lace and a blaze of jewels; and the first lesson taught the youthful Christian in short frocks or knickerbockers is not to carry tales down stairs, and by no means to let mamma know what nurse desires should be kept secret.

A great deal of other evil, beside these sly beginnings of deceit, is taught in the nursery; a great deal of vulgar thought, of superstitious fear, of class coarseness. As, indeed, how must it not be when we think of the early habits and education of the women taken into the nursery to give the first strong indelible impressions to the young souls under their care? Many a man with a ruined constitution, and many a woman with shattered nerves, can trace back the beginning of their sorrow to those neglected childish days when nurse

had it all her own way because mamma never looked below the surface, and was satisfied with what was said instead of seeing for herself what was done. It is an odd state of society which tolerates this transfer of a mother's holiest and most important duty into the hands of a mere stranger, hired by the month, and never thoroughly known.

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

Folly is the true capillary attraction of the moral world, and penetrates every stratum of society; and the folly of extravagant attire in the drawing-room is reproduced in the nursery. Not content with bewildering men's minds and emptying their husbands' purses for the enhancement of their own charms, women do the same by their children; and the mother who leaves the health and mind and temper and purity of her offspring in the keeping of a hired nurse takes especial care of the colour and cut of the frocks and petticoats. And there is always the same strain after show, and the same endeavour to make a little look a mickle. The children of five hundred a year must look like those of a thousand; and those of a thousand must rival the tenue of little lords and ladies born in the purple; while the amount of money spent on clothes in the tradesman class is a matter of real amazement to those let into the secret. Simplicity of diet, too, is going out with simplicity of dress, with simplicity of habits generally; and stimulants and concentrated food are now the rule in the nursery, where they mar as many constitutions as they make. More than one child of whom we have had personal knowledge has yielded to disease induced by too stimulating and too heating a diet; but artificial habits demand corresponding artificiality of food, and so the candle burns at both ends instead of one.

Again, as for the increasing inability of educated women to nurse their children, even if desirous of doing so, that also is a bodily condition brought about by an unwholesome and unnatural state of life. Late hours, high living, heated blood, and constantly breathing a vitiated atmosphere are the causes of this alarming physical defect. But it would be too much to expect that women should forego their pleasurable indulgences, or do anything disagreeable to their senses, for the sake of their offspring. They are not

famous for looking far ahead on any matter; but to expect them to look beyond themselves, and their own present generation, is to expect the great miracle that never comes.

MODERN MOTHERS.
II

There was once a superstition among us that mothers were of use in the world; that they had their functions and duties, without which society would not prosper nor hold together; and that much of the well-being of humanity, present and future, depended on them. Mothers in those bygone days were by no means effete personages or a worn-out institution, but living powers exercising a real and pervading influence; and they were credited with an authority which they did not scruple to use when required.

One of the functions recognized as specially belonging to them was that of guarding their young people from the consequences of their own ignorance—keeping them from dangers both physical and moral until wise enough to take care of themselves, and supplementing by their own experience the want of it in their children. Another was that of preserving the tone of society on a high level, and supplying the antiseptic element by which the rest was kept pure; as, for example, insisting that the language used and the subjects discussed before them were such as should not offend the modesty of virtuous women; that the people with whom they were required to associate should be moderately honest and well conducted; and, in short, as mothers, discountenancing everything in other men and women which they would not like to see imitated by their own sons and daughters.

This was one of the fond superstitions of an elder time. For ourselves, we boast of our freedom from superstition in these later days; of our proud renunciation of restraints and habits which were deemed beneficial by our forefathers; of our indifference to forms and hatred of humbug; and of all that tends to fetter what is called individualism. Hence we have found that we can go on without safeguards for our young; that society does not want its matrons as the preservative ingredient for keeping it pure; and that the world is all the merrier for the loosening of bonds which once it was the duty of women to draw closer. In fact, mothers have gone out, surviving only in the form of chaperons.

More or less on the search for her own pleasure—if by any possibility of artifice she can be taken for less than sixty, still ready for odd snatches of flirting as she can find occasion—or, with her faculties concentrated on the chance of winning the rubber by indifferent play—the chaperon's charge is not a very onerous one; and her daughters know as well as she does that her presence is a blind rather than a protection. They are with mamma as a form of speech; but they are left to themselves as a matter of fact. Anyone who is in the confidence of young people of either sex knows a little of what goes on in the dark corners and on the steps of the stairs—a favourite anchorage for the

loosely chaperoned in private houses where two hundred are invited and only a hundred can find room. But then the girls are 'with mamma,' and the young men are contented souls who take what they can get without making wry faces. Mamma, occupied in her own well-seasoned coquetries, or absorbed in the chances of her deep 'finesse' and the winning trick, lets the girls take care of themselves, and would think it an intolerable impertinence should a friend hint to her that her place of chaperon included vigilant personal guardianship, and that she would do better to keep her daughters in her own charge than leave them to themselves.

It is all very well for the advocates of youthful innocence to affect to resent the slur supposed to be cast on girlhood by the advocacy of this closer guardianship; or for those who do not know the world to make their ignorance the measure of another's knowledge, and to deny what they have not proved for themselves. Those who do know the world know what they say when they deprecate the excessive freedom which is too often granted to unmarried girls; and their warning is fully justified by experience when they call mothers back to their duty of stricter watchfulness. If indeed the young are capable of self-protection, then we grant with them that mothers are a mistake:—Let them abdicate without more ado. If license is more desirable than modesty, and liberty better than reticence, the girls may as well be left, as practically they are already, free from the mother's guardianship; but if we have a doubt that way, we may as well give it the benefit of consideration, and think a little on the subject before going further on the present line.

From the first the mother, in the well-to-do classes, acts too much the part of the hen ostrich with her eggs. She trusts to the kindly influences of external circumstances rather than to her own care to make the hatching successful. Nurses, governesses, schools, in turn relieve her of the irksome duties of maternity. She sees her little ones at their stated hour, and for the other twenty-three leaves them to receive their first indelible impress from a class which she is never tired of disparaging.

As the children grow older the women by whom they are moulded become higher in the social and intellectual scale, but they are no more than before subordinated to the mother's personal supervision. She, for her part, cares only that her girls shall be taught the correct shibboleth of their station; and for the rest, if she thinks at all, she cradles herself in a generous trust in the goodness of human nature, or the incorruptibility of her brood beyond that of any other woman's brood. When they come under her own immediate hand, 'finished' and ready to be introduced, she knows about as much of them as she knows of her neighbours' girls in the next square; and in nine cases out of ten the sole duties towards them which are undertaken by her are shirked when possible, as a corvée which she is too wise to bear unnecessarily. When she can, she shuffles them off on some kind neighbourly hands, and lets her daughters 'go about'

with the first person who offers, glad to have a little breathing time on her own side, and with always that generous trust in providence and vicarious protection which has marked her maternal career throughout.

In the lower half of the middle class the liberty allowed to young girls grows yearly more and more unchecked. They walk alone, travel alone, visit alone; and the gravest evils have been known to arise from the habit which modern mothers have of sending their daughters of sixteen and upwards unaccompanied in London to colleges and classes. Mamma has grown stout and lazy, and has always some important matter on hand that keeps her at home, half asleep in the easy-chair, while the girls go to and fro, and take the exercise befitting their youthful energies. Of course no harm can befall them. They are her daughters, and the warnings given by the keener-eyed, who have had experience, are mere inventions of the enemy and slanders against the young. So they parade the streets, dressed in the most startling and meretricious costumes of the period; and that fatal doctrine of self-protection counts its victims by the score as the consequence.

The world is fond of throwing the blame of any misfortune that may arise, now on the girl, now on the man concerned; but in honest fact that blame really belongs to the mothers who let their daughters run about the world without guide or guard. A work was given to them by nature and love to do which they have neglected, a duty which they have discarded. Whoever chooses may chaperon, accompany, mould their daughters, so long as they are freed from the trouble; and their dependence on the natural virtue of humanity and the beneficence of circumstance runs exactly parallel with their own indolence and neglect.

In preserving the tone of society pure the modern mother is as far removed from the former ideal as she is in the duty of taking care of her girls. Too often she is found making herself prominent in support of the most objectionable movements; or, when doubtful questions are discussed in mixed society, she forgets that regard for the purity of her daughters should keep her silent, even if her own self-respect were too weak to restrain her. When the conscienceless world, living without a higher aim than that of success and what is known by getting on, condones all kinds of moral obliquity for the sake of financial prosperity and social position, do we find that, as a rule, mothers and matrons protest against opening their houses to this gilded rascality? If they did—if they made demerit and not poverty the cause of exclusion, virtue and not success the title to reception—there would be some check to the corruption which is so insolently rampant now.

Women have this power in their own hands, more especially those women who are mothers. If they would only set themselves to check the inclination for loose talk and doubtful discussions which is characteristic of the present moment, they could put an

end to it without delay. So also they might stop in less than a year the torrent of slang with which Young England floods its daily speech; and by setting themselves against the paint and dye and meretricious make-up generally of the modern girl, they might bring next quarter's fashions back to modesty and simplicity.

Women are apt to murmur at their lot as one without influence, variety, stirring purpose, space for action. But it is, on the contrary, a lot full of dignity and importance if properly regarded and fitly undertaken. If they do not lead armies, they make the characters of the men who lead and are led. If they are not State Ministers nor Parliamentary orators, they raise by their nobleness or degrade by their want of delicacy and refinement the souls and minds of the men who are. If they are not in the throng and press of active life, they can cheer others on to high aims, or basely reward the baser methods of existence. As mothers they are the artificers who give the initial touch that lasts for life; and as women they complete what the mother began. Society is moulded mainly by them, and they bring up their daughters on their own pattern.

It is surely weak and silly then to blame society for its ignoble tone, or the young for their disorders. All men want the corrective influence of social opinion, and it is chiefly women who create that opinion. Youth, too, will ever be disorderly if it gets the chance, and the race has not yet been born that carries old heads on young shoulders. It is for the mothers to supplement by their own wisdom the gaps left by the inexperience and ignorance of youth; it is for the mothers to guide aright the steps that are apt, without that guidance, to run astray, and to guard against passions, emotions, desires, which, if left to themselves, bring only evil and disaster, but which, guarded and directed, may be turned to the best ends. For ourselves, we deeply regret to see the rapid extinction of motherhood in its best sense, and decline to accept this modern loose-handed chaperon age as its worthy substitute. We repudiate the plea of the insubordination of the young so often put forward in defence of the new state of things, for it is simply nonsense. The young are what the mothers make them, just as society is what the matrons allow it to be; and if these mothers and matrons did their duty, we should hear no more of the wilfulness of the one or the shameless vagaries of the other. The remedy for each lies in their own hands only.

PAYING ONE'S SHOT.

It would save much useless striving and needless disappointment if the necessity of paying one's shot were honestly accepted as absolute—if it were understood, once for all, that society, like other manifestations of humanity, is managed on the principle of exchange and barter, and equivalents demanded for value received. The benevolence which gives out of its own impulse, with no hope of reward save in the well-being of the recipient, has no place in the drawing-room code of morals. We may keep a useless creature from starving at the cost of so much of our substance per diem, for the sole remuneration of thanks and the consciousness of an equivocal act of charity; but who among us opens his doors, or gives a seat at his table, to drawing-room paupers unable to pay their shot? who cares to cultivate the acquaintance of men or women who are unable to make him any return? It is not necessary that this return should be in kind—a dinner for a dinner, a champagne supper for a champagne supper, and balls with waxed floors for balls with stretched linen; but shot must be paid in some form, whether in kind or not, and the social pauper who cannot pay his quota is Lazarus excluded from the feast. This is a hard saying, but it is a true one. We often hear worthy people who do not understand this law complain that they are neglected—left out of wedding breakfasts—passed over in dinner invitations—and that they find it difficult to keep acquaintances when made. But the fact is, these poor creatures who know so much about the cold-shoulder of society are simply those who cannot pay their shot, according to the currency of the class to which they aspire; and so by degrees they get winnowed through the meshes, and fall to a level where their funds will suffice to meet all demands, triumphantly. For the rejected of one level are not necessarily the rejected of all, and the base metal of one currency is sound coinage in another. People who would find it impossible to enter a drawing-room in Grosvenor Square may have all Bloomsbury at their command; and what was caviare to My Lord will be ambrosia to his valet—all depending on the amount of the shot to be paid and the relative value of coinage wherewith to pay it.

The most simple form of payment is of course by the elemental process of reciprocity in kind; a dinner for a dinner and a supper for a supper:—a form as purely instinctive as an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth—the lex talionis of early jurisprudence administered among wine-cups instead of in the shambles. But there are other modes of payment as efficient if less evident, and as imperative if more subtle. For instance, women pay their shot—when they pay it individually, and not through the vicarious merits of their masculine relations—by dressing well and looking nice; some by being pretty; some by being fashionable; a few by brilliant talk; while all ought to add to their private speciality the generic virtue of pleasant manners. If they are not pretty, pleasant,

well-dressed nor well-connected, and if they have no masculine pegs of power by which they can be hooked on to the higher lines, they are let to drop through the social meshes without an effort made to retain them, as little fishes swim away unopposed through the loops which hold the bigger ones. These things are their social duties—the final cause of their drawing-room existence; and if they fail in them they fail in the purpose for which they were created socially, and may die out as soon as convenient. They have other duties, of course, and doubtless of far higher moment and greater worth; but the question now is only of their drawing-room duties—of the qualities which secure their recognition in society—of the special coinage in which they must pay their shot if they would assist at the great banquet of social life. A dowdy, humdrum, well-principled woman, whose toilette looks as if it had been made with the traditionary pitchfork, and whose powers of conversation do not go beyond the strength of Cobwebs to Catch Flies, or Mangnall's Questions, may be an admirable wife, the painstaking mother of future honest citizens, invaluable by a sick-bed, beyond price in the nursery, a pattern of all household economies, a woman absolutely faultless in her sphere—and that sphere a very sweet and lovely one. But her virtues are not those by which she can pay her shot in society; and the motherly goodness, of so much account in a dressing-jacket and list-slippers, is put out of court when the fee to be paid is liveliness of manner or elegance of appearance. Certainly, worthy women who dress ill and look ungraceful, and whose conversation is about up to the mark of their children's easy-spelling-books, are plentiful in society—unfortunately for those bracketed with them for two hours' penance; but in most cases they have their shot paid for them by the wealth, the importance, the repute, or the desirableness of their relations. They may pay it themselves by their own wealth and consequent liberal tariff of reciprocity; but this is rare; the possession of personal superiority of any kind for the most part acting as a moral stimulus with women whom the superiority of their male belongings does not touch. And, by the way, it is rather hard lines that so many celebrated men have such dowdy wives. Artists, poets, self-made men of all kinds often fail in this special article; and, while they themselves have caught the tone of the circle to which they have risen, and pay their shot by manner as well as by repute, their wives lag behind among the ashes of the past, like Cinderellas before the advent of the fairy godmother. How many of them are carried through society as clogs or excrescences which a polite world is bound to tolerate with more or less equanimity, according to the amount of sensitiveness bestowed by nature and cultivated by art! Sometimes, however, self-made men and their wives are wise in their generation and understand the terms on which society receives its members; in which case the marital Reputation goes to the front alone, and the conjugal Cinderella rests tranquilly in the rear.

Notoriety of all kinds, short of murder or forgery, is one way of paying one's shot, specially into the coffers of the Leo Hunters, of whom there are many. It is shot paid to the general fund when one has seen an accident—better still, if one has been in it. Many

a man has owed a rise in his scale of dinners to a railway smash; and to have been nearly burnt to death, to have escaped by a miracle from drowning, to have been set on by footpads or to have been visited by burglars, is worth a round of At Homes, because of the ready cash of a real adventure. To be connected more or less remotely with the fashionable tragedy of the hour is paying one's shot handsomely. To have been on speaking terms with the latest respectable scoundrel unmasked, or to have had dealings, sufficiently remote to have been cleanly, with the newest villainy, will be accepted as shot while the public interest in the matter lasts. A chance visit to ultra-grandees—grandees in ratio to the ordinary sphere—is shot paid with an air. A bad illness, or the attendance on one, with the apparently unconscious heroism of the details, comes in as part of the social fine; especially if the person relating his or her experience has the knack of epigram or exaggeration, while still keeping local colour and verisimilitude intact. Interesting people who have been abroad and seen things have good counters for a dinner-party; paying their shot for themselves and their hosts too, who put them forward as their contribution to the funds of the commonwealth, with certainty of acceptance. Some pay their shot by their power of procuring orders and free admissions. They know the manager of this theatre or the leading actor of that; they are acquainted with the principal members of the hanging committees, and are therefore great in private views; they are always good for a gratuitous treat to folks who can afford to pay twice the sum demanded for their day's pleasure. Such people may be stupid, ungainly, not specially polished, in grain unpleasant; but they circulate in society because they pay their shot and give back equivalents for value received. A country-house, where there is a good tennis-ground and a blushing bed of strawberries, is coinage that will carry the possessor very far ahead through London society; and by the same law you will find healthy, well-conditioned country folk tolerate undeniable little snobs of low calibre because of that sixteen-roomed house in Tyburnia, a visit to which represents so many concerts, so many theatres, a given number of exhibitions, and a certain quantity of operas and parties. Had those undeniable little snobs no funds wherewith to pay their shot, they would have had no place kept for them among the rose-trees and the strawberry-beds; but, bringing their quota as they do, they take their seat with the rest and are helped in their turn.

In fact, humiliating to our self-love as it may be, the truth is, we are all valued socially, not for ourselves integrally, not for the mere worth of the naked soul, but for the kind of shot that we pay—for the advantage or amusement to others that we can bring—for something in ourselves which renders us desirable as companions—or for something belonging to our condition which makes us remunerative as guests. If we have no special qualification, if we neither look nice nor talk well, neither bring glory nor confer pleasure, we must expect to be shunted to the side in favour of others who are up to the right mark and who give as much as they receive. If this truth were once fully established as a matter of social science, a great advance would be made; for nothing

helps people so much as to clear a subject of what fog may lie about it. And as the tendency of the age is to discover the fixed laws which regulate the mutable affairs of man, it would be just as well to extend the inquiry from the jury-box to the dinner-table, and from the blue-book to the visiting-list. Why is it that some people struggle all their lives to get a footing in society, yet die as they have lived—social Sisyphuses, never accomplishing their perpetually-recurring task? There must be a reason for it, seeing that nothing is ruled by blind chance, though much seems to lie outside the independent will of the individual. Enlighten these worthy people's minds on the unwritten laws of invitation, and show them that—thoroughly honest souls and to be trusted with untold gold or with their neighbour's pretty wife, which is perhaps a harder test, as they may be—they are by no means to be trusted with the amusement of a couple of companions at a dinner-table. Show them that, how rich soever they may be in the rough gold of domestic morality, they are bankrupts in the small-change which alone passes current in society—and, if invited where they aspire to be, they would be taken on as pauper cousins unable to pay their footing and good for neither meat nor garnish. Let them learn how to pay their shot, and their difficulties would vanish. They would leave off repeating the fable of Sisyphus, and attain completion of endeavour. No one need say this is a hard or a selfish doctrine, for we all follow it in practice. Among the people we invite to our houses are some whom we do not specially like, but whom we must ask because of shot paid in kind. There are people who may be personally disagreeable, ill-educated, uninteresting, ungainly, but whom we cannot cut because of the relations in which we stand towards them, and who take their place by right, because they pay their shot with punctuality. There are others whom we ask because of liking or desirability, and shot paid in some specific form of pleasantness, as in beauty, fashion, good manner, notoriety; but there are none absolutely barren of all gifts of pleasantness to the guests, of reflected honour to ourselves, and of social small-change according to the currency. We do not go into the byways and hedges to pick up drawing-room tatterdemalions who bring nothing with them and are simply so much deadweight on the rest, occupying so much valuable space and consuming so much vital energy. The law of reciprocity may be hard on the strivers who are ignorant of its inexorable provisions; but it is a wholesome law, like other rules and enactments against remediable pauperism. And were we once thoroughly to understand that, if we would sit securely at the table we must put something of value into the pool—that we must possess advantageous circumstances, or personal desirabilities, as the shot to be paid for our place—the art of society would be better cultivated than it is now, and the classification of guests would be carried out with greater judgment. Surely, if the need of being gracious in manner, sprightly in talk, and of pleasant appearance generally—all cultivable qualities, and to be learned if not born in us by nature—were accepted as an absolute necessity, without which we must expect to be overlooked and excluded, drawing-rooms would be far brighter and dinner-tables far pleasanter than they are at present; to the advantage of all concerned! And, after all, society is a great thing in human life. If not equal in importance to the family, or to

political virtue, it has its own special value; and whatever adds to its better organization is a gain in every sense.

The Girl of the Period and Other Social Essays, Vol. I by Eliza Lynn Linton

WHAT IS WOMAN'S WORK?

This is a question which one half the world is at this moment asking the other half; with very wild answers as the result. Woman's work seems to be in these days everything that it was not in times past, and nothing that it was. Professions are undertaken and careers invaded which were formerly held sacred to men; while things are left undone which, for all the generations that the world has lasted, have been naturally and instinctively assigned to women to do. From the savage squaw gathering fuel or drawing water for the wigwam, to the lady giving up the keys to her housekeeper, housekeeping has been considered one of the primary functions of women. The man to provide—the woman to dispense; the man to do the rough initial work of bread-winning, whether as a half-naked barbarian hunting live meat or as a City clerk painfully scoring lines of rugged figures—the woman to cook the meat when got, and to lay out to the best advantage for the family the quarter's salary gained by casting up ledgers and writing advices and bills of lading. Take human society in any phase we like, we must come down to these radical conditions; and any system which ignores this division of labour, and confounds these separate functions, is of necessity imperfect and wrong. We have nothing whatever to say against the professional self-support of women who have no men to work for them, and who must therefore work for themselves in order to live. In what direction soever they can best make their way, let them take it. Brains and intellectual gifts are of no sex and no condition, and it is far more important that good work should be done than that it should be done by this or that particular set of workers. But we are speaking of the home duties of married women, and of those girls who have no need to earn their daily bread, and who are not so specially gifted as to be driven afield by the irrepressible power of genius. We are speaking of women who cannot help in the family income, but who might both save and improve in the home; women whose lives are one long day of idleness, ennui and vagrant imagination, because they despise the activities into which they were born, while seeking outlets for their energies impossible to them both by functional and social restrictions.

It is strange to see into what unreasonable disrepute active housekeeping—first social duty—has fallen in England. Take a family with four or five hundred a year—and we know how small a sum that is for 'genteel humanity' in these days—the wife who is an active housekeeper, even with such an income, is an exception to the rule; and the daughters who are anything more than drawing-room dolls waiting for husbands to transfer them to a home of their own, where they may be as useless as they are now, are rarer still. For things are getting worse, not better, and our young women are less useful even than were their mothers; while these last do not, as a rule, come near the

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

What is there in practical housekeeping less honourable than the ordinary work of middle-class gentlewomen? and why should women shrink from doing for utility, and for the general comfort of the family, what they would do at any time for vanity or idleness? No one need go into extremes, and wish our middle-class gentlewomen to become exaggerated Marthas occupied only with much serving, Nausicaas washing linen, or 'wise Penelopes' spending their lives in needlework alone. But, without undertaking anything unpleasant to her senses or degrading to her condition, a lady might do hundreds of things which are now left undone in a house, or are given up to the coarse handling of servants; and domestic life would gain in consequence. What degradation, for instance, is there in cookery? and how much more home happiness

would there not be if wives would take in hand that great cold-mutton question? But women are both selfish and small on this point. Born for the most part with feebly-developed gustativeness, they affect to despise the stronger instinct in men, and think it low and sensual if they are expected to give special attention to the meals of the man who provides the meat. This contempt for good cooking is one cause of the ignorance there is among them of how to secure good living. Those horrible traditions of 'plain roast and boiled' cling about them as articles of culinary faith; and because they have reached no higher knowledge for themselves, they decide that no one else shall go beyond them. For one middle-class gentlewoman who understands anything about cookery, or who really cares for it as a scientific art or domestic necessity, there are ten thousand who do not; yet our mothers and grandmothers were not ashamed to be known as deft professors, and homes were happier in proportion to the respect paid to the stewpan and the stockpot. And cookery is more interesting now than it was then, because more advanced, more scientific, and with improved appliances; and, at the same time, it is of confessedly more importance.

It may seem humiliating, to those who go in for spirit pure and simple, to speak of the condition of the soul as in any way determined by beef and cabbage; but it is so, nevertheless; the connexion between food and virtue, food and thought, being a very close one. And the sooner wives recognize this connexion the better for them and for their husbands. The clumsy savagery of a plain cook, or the vile messes of a fourth-rate confectioner, are absolute sins in a house where a woman has all her senses, and can, if she will, attend personally to the cooking. Many things pass for crimes which are really not so bad as this. But how seldom do we find a house where the lady does look after the food of the family; where clean hands and educated brains are put to active service for the good of others! The trouble would be too great in our fine-lady days, even if there were the requisite ability; but there is as little ability as there is energy, and the plain cook with her savagery and the fourth-rate confectioner with his rancid pastry, have it all their own way, according as the election is for economy or ostentation. If by chance we stumble on a household where the woman does not disdain housewifely work, and specially does not disdain the practical superintendence of the kitchen, there we are sure to find cheerfulness and content.

There seems to be something in the life of a practical housekeeper that answers to the needs of a woman's best nature, and that makes her pleasant and good-humoured. Perhaps it is the consciousness that she is doing her duty—of itself a wonderful sweetener of the temper; perhaps the greater amount of bodily exercise keeps her liver in good case; whatever the cause, sure it is that the homes of the active housekeepers are more harmonious than those of the feckless and do-nothing sort. Yet the snobbish half of the middle-classes holds housewifely work as degrading, save in the trumpery pretentiousness of 'giving orders.' A woman may sit in a dirty drawing room which the

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

The whole scheme of woman's life at this present time is untenable and unfair. She wants to have all the pleasures and none of the disagreeables. Her husband goes to the City and does monotonous and unpleasant work there; but his wife thinks herself very hardly dealt with if asked to do monotonous housework at home. Yet she does nothing more elevating nor more advantageous. Novel-reading, fancy-work, visiting and letter-writing, sum up her ordinary occupations; and she considers these more to the point than practical housekeeping. In fact it becomes a serious question what women think themselves sent into the world for—what they hold themselves designed by God to be or to do. They grumble at having children and at the toil and anxiety which a family entails; they think themselves degraded to the level of servants if they have to do any practical housework whatever; they assert their equality with man, and express their envy of his life, yet show themselves incapable of learning the first lesson set to men—that of doing what they do not like to do. What, then, do they want? What do they hold themselves made for? Certainly some of the more benevolent sort carry their energies out of doors, and leave such prosaic matters as savoury dinners and fast shirt-buttons for committees and charities, where they get excitement and kudos together. Others give themselves to what they call keeping up society, which means being more at home in every person's house than their own; and some do a little weak art, and others a little feeble literature; but there are very few indeed who honestly buckle to the natural duties of their position, and who bear with the tedium of home-work as men bear with the tedium of office-work.

The little royalty of home is the last place where a woman cares to shine, and the most uninteresting of all the domains she seeks to govern. Fancy a high-souled creature, capable of æsthetics, giving her mind to soup or the right proportion of chutnee for the curry! Fancy, too, a brilliant creature fore-going an evening's conversational glory abroad for the sake of a prosaic husband's more prosaic dinner! He comes home tired from work, and desperately in need of a good dinner as a restorative; but the plain cook gives him cold meat and pickles, or an abomination which she calls hash, and the brilliant creature, full of mind, thinks the desire for anything else rank sensuality. It seems a little hard, certainly, on the unhappy fellow who works at the mill for such a

return; but women believe that men are made only to work at the mill that they may receive the grist accruing, and be kept in idleness and uselessness all their lives. They have no idea of lightening the labour of that mill-round by doing their own natural work cheerfully and diligently. They will do everything but what they ought to do. They will make themselves doctors, committee-women, printers, what not; but they will not learn cooking, and they will not keep their own houses. There never was a time when women were less the helpmates of men than they are at present; when there was such a wide division between the interests and the sympathies of the sexes coincident with the endeavour, on the one side, to approximate their pursuits.

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

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

The Girl of the Period and Other Social Essays, Vol. I by Eliza Lynn Linton

LITTLE WOMEN

The conventional idea of a brave, energetic, or a supremely criminal, woman has always been that of a tall, dark-haired, large-armed virago who might pass as the younger brother of her husband, and about whom nature seemed to have hesitated before determining whether to make her a man or a woman:—a kind of debateable land, in fact, between the two sexes, and almost as much the one as the other. Helen Macgregor, Lady Macbeth, Catharine de Medici, Mrs. Manning, and the old-fashioned murderesses in novels, were all of the muscular, black-brigand type, with more or less of regal grace super-added according to circumstances; and it would have been thought nothing but a puerile fancy to have supposed the contrary of those whose personal description was not already known. Crime, indeed, in art and fiction, was generally painted in very nice proportion to the number of cubic inches embodied and the depth of colour employed; though we are bound to add that the public favour ran towards muscular heroines almost as much as towards muscular murderesses, which to a certain extent redressed the overweighted balance. Our later novelists, however, have altered the whole setting of the palette. Instead of five foot ten of black and brown, they have gone in for four foot nothing of pink and yellow. Instead of tumbled masses of raven hair, they have shining coils of purest gold. Instead of hollow caverns whence flash unfathomable eyes eloquent of every damnable passion, they have limpid lakes of heavenly blue; and their worst sinners are in all respects fashioned as much after the outward semblance of the ideal saint as they have skill to design.

The original notion was a very good one, and the revolution did not come before it was wanted; but it has been a little overdone of late, and we are threatened with as great a surfeit of small-limbed yellow-headed criminals as we have had of the black-haired virago. One gets weary of the most perfect model in time, if too constantly repeated; as now, when we have all begun to feel that the resources of the angel's face and demon's soul have been more heavily drawn on than is quite fair, and that, given 'heavy braids of golden hair,' 'bewildering blue eyes,' 'a small lithe frame,' and special delicacy of feet and hands, we are booked for the companionship, through three volumes, of a young person to whom Messalina or Lucrezia Borgia was a mere novice.

And yet there is a physiological truth in this association of energy with smallness—perhaps, also, with a certain tint of yellow hair, which, with a dash of red through it, is decidedly suggestive of nervous force. Suggestiveness, indeed, does not go very far in an argument; but the frequent connexion of energy and smallness in women is a thing which all may verify in their own circles. In daily life, who is the really formidable

woman to encounter?—the black-browed, broad-shouldered giantess, with arms almost as big in the girth as a man's? or the pert, smart, trim little female, with no more biceps than a ladybird, and of just about equal strength with a sparrow? Nine times out of ten, the giantess with the heavy shoulders and broad black eyebrows is a timid, feeble-minded, good-tempered person, incapable of anything harsher than a mild remonstrance with her maid, or a gentle chastisement of her children. Nine times out of ten her husband has her in hand in the most perfect working order, so that she would swear the moon shone at midday if it were his pleasure that she should make a fool of herself by her submissiveness. One of the most obedient and indolent of earth's daughters, she gives no trouble to any one, save the trouble of rousing, exciting and setting going; while, as for the conception or execution of any naughty piece of self-assertion, she is as utterly incapable of either as if she were a child unborn, and demands nothing better than to feel the pressure of the leading-strings, and to know exactly by their strain where she is desired to go and what to do.

But the little woman is irrepressible. Too fragile to come into the fighting section of humanity—a puny creature whom one blow from a man's huge fist could annihilate—absolutely fearless, and insolent with the insolence which only those dare show who know that retribution cannot follow—what can be done with her? She is afraid of nothing and to be controlled by no one. Sheltered behind her weakness as behind a triple shield of brass, the angriest man dare not touch her, while she provokes him to a combat in which his hands are tied. She gets her own way in everything and everywhere. At home and abroad she is equally dominant and irrepressible, equally free from obedience and from fear. Who breaks all the public order in sights and shows, and, in spite of King, Kaiser, or Policeman X, goes where it is expressly forbidden that she shall go? Not the large-boned, muscular woman, whatever her temperament; unless, indeed, of the exceptionally haughty type in distinctly inferior surroundings—and then she can queen it royally enough and set everything at most lordly defiance.

But in general the large-boned woman obeys the orders given, because, while near enough to man to be somewhat on a par with him, she is still undeniably his inferior. She is too strong to shelter herself behind her weakness, yet too weak to assert her strength and defy her master on equal grounds. She is like a flying fish—not one thing wholly; and while capable of the inconveniences of two lives is incapable of the privileges of either. It is not she, for all her well-developed frame and formidable looks, but the little woman, who breaks the whole code of laws and defies all their defenders—the pert, smart, pretty little woman, who laughs in your face and goes straight ahead if you try to turn her to the right hand or to the left, receiving your remonstrances with the most sublime indifference, as if you were talking a foreign language she could not understand. She carries everything before her, wherever she is. You may see her stepping over barriers, slipping under ropes, penetrating to the green benches with a red

ticket, taking the best places on the platform over the heads of their rightful owners, settling herself among the reserved seats without an inch of pasteboard to float her. You cannot turn her out by main force. British chivalry objects to the public laying on of hands in the case of a woman, even when most recalcitrant and disobedient; more particularly if she be a small and fragile-looking woman. So that, if it be only a usurpation of places specially masculine, she is allowed to retain what she has got, amid the grave looks of the elders—not really displeased at the flutter of her ribbons among them—and the titters and nudges of the young fellows.

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

As a rule, the little woman is brave. When the lymphatic giantess falls into a faint or goes off into hysterics, she storms, or bustles about, or holds on like a game terrier, according to the work on hand. She will fly at any man who annoys her, and she bears herself as equal to the biggest and strongest fellow of her acquaintance. In general she does it all by sheer pluck, and is not notorious for subtlety or craft. Had Delilah been a little woman she would never have taken the trouble to shear Samson's locks. She would have stood up against him with all his strength untouched on his head, and she would have overcome him too. Judith and Jael were both probably large women. The work they went about demanded a certain strength of muscle and toughness of sinew; but who can say that Jezebel was not a small, freckled, auburn-haired Lady Audley of her time, full of the concentrated fire, the electric force, the passionate recklessness of her type? Regan and Goneril might have been beautiful demons of the same pattern; we have the

example of the Marchioness de Brinvilliers as to what amount of spiritual devilry can exist with the face and manner of an angel direct from heaven; and perhaps Cordelia was a tall dark-haired girl, with a pair of brown eyes, and a long nose sloping downwards.

Look at modern Jewesses, with their flashing Oriental orbs, their night-black tresses and the dusky shadows of their olive-coloured complexions. As catalogued properties according to the ideal, they would be placed in the list of the natural criminals and law-breakers, while in reality they are about as meek and docile a set of women as are to be found within the four seas. Pit a fiery little Welsh woman or a petulant Parisienne against the most regal and Junonic amongst them, and let them try conclusions in courage, in energy, in audacity; the Israelitish Juno will go down before either of the small Philistines, and the fallacy of weight and colour in the generation of power will be shown without the possibility of denial.

Even in those old days of long ago, when human characteristics were embodied and deified, we do not find that the white-armed large-limbed Hera, though queen by right of marriage, lorded it over her sister goddesses by any superior energy or force of nature. On the contrary, she was rather a heavy-going person, and, unless moved to anger by her husband's numerous infidelities, took her Olympian life placidly enough, and once or twice got cheated in a way that did no great credit to her sagacity. A little Frenchwoman would have sailed round her easily; and as it was, shrewish though she was in her speech when provoked, her husband not only deceived but chastised her, and reduced her to penitence and obedience as no little woman would have suffered herself to be reduced.

There is one celebrated race of women who were probably the powerfully-built, large-limbed creatures they are assumed to have been, and as brave and energetic as they were strong and big—the Norse women of the sagas, who, for good or evil, seem to have been a very influential element in the old Northern life. Prophetesses; physicians; dreamers of dreams and accredited interpreters as well; endowed with magic powers; admitted to a share in the councils of men; brave in war; active in peace; these fair-haired Scandinavian women were the fit comrades of their men, the fit wives and mothers of the Berserkers and the Vikings. They had no tame nor easy life of it, if all we hear of them be true. To defend the farm and the homestead during their husbands' absence, and to keep these and themselves intact against all bold rovers to whom the Tenth Commandment was an unknown law; to dazzle and bewilder by magic arts when they could not conquer by open strength; to unite craft and courage, deception and daring, loyalty and independence, demanded no small amount of opposing qualities. But the Steingerdas and Gudrunas were generally equal to any emergency of fate or fortune, and slashed their way through the history of their time more after the manner

of men than of women; supplementing their downright blows by side thrusts of craftier cleverness when they had to meet power with skill and were fain to overthrow brutality by fraud. The Norse women were certainly as largely framed as they were mentally energetic, and as crafty as either; but we know of no other women who unite the same characteristics and are at once cunning, strong, brave and true.

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

The Girl of the Period and Other Social Essays, Vol. I by Eliza Lynn Linton

IDEAL WOMEN.

It is often objected against fault-finders, writers or others, that they destroy but do not build up; that while industriously blaming errors they take good care not to praise the counteracting virtues; that in their zeal against the vermin of which they are seeking to sweep the house clean they forget the nobler creatures which do the good work of keeping things sweet and wholesome. But it is impossible to be continually introducing the saving clause, 'all are not so bad as these.' The seven thousand righteous who have not bowed the knee to Baal are understood to exist in all communities; and, vicious as any special section may be, there must always be the hidden salt and savour of the virtuous to keep the whole from falling into utter corruption.

This is specially true of modern women. Certainly some of them are as unsatisfactory as any of their kind who have ever appeared on earth before; but it would be very queer logic to infer therefore that all are bad alike, and that our modern womanhood is as ill off as the Cities of the Plain, which could not be saved for want of the ten just men to save them. Happily, we have noble women among us yet; women who believe in something besides pleasure, and who do their work faithfully, wherever it may lie; women who can and do sacrifice themselves for love and duty, and who do not think they were sent into the world simply to run one mad life-long race for wealth, for dissipation, for distinction. But the life of such women is essentially in retirement; and though the lesson they teach is beautiful, yet its influence is necessarily confined, because of the narrow sphere of the teacher. When public occasions for devotedness occur, we in some sort measure the extent to which the self-sacrifice of women can be carried; but in general their noblest virtues come out only in the quiet sacredness of home, and the most heroic lives of patience and well-doing go on in seclusion, uncheered by sympathy and unrewarded by applause.

Still, it is impossible to write of one absolute womanly ideal—one single type that shall satisfy every man's fancy; for, naturally, what would be perfection to one is imperfection to another, according to the special bent of the individual mind. Thus one man's ideal of womanly perfection is in beauty, mere physical outside beauty; and not all the virtues under heaven could warm him into love with red hair or a snub nose. He is entirely happy if his wife be undeniably the handsomest woman of his acquaintance, and holds himself blessed when all men admire and all women envy. But he is blessed for his own sake rather than for hers. Pleasant as her loveliness is to look on, it is pleasanter to know that he is the possessor of it. The 'handsomest woman in the room' comes into the same category as the finest picture or the most thoroughbred horse within his sphere; and if

the degree of pride in his possession be different, the kind is the same. And so in minor proportions—from the most beautiful woman of all, to simply beauty as a sine quâ non, whatever else may be wanting. One other thing only is as absolute as this beauty, and that is its undivided possession.

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

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

Another man wants a cultivated intelligence in his ideal. As an author, an artist, a student, a statesman, he would like his wife to be able to help him by the contact of bright wit and ready intellect. He believes in the sex of minds, and holds no work complete which has not been created by the one and perfected by the other. He sees how women have helped on the leaders in troublous times; he knows that almost all great men have owed something of their greatness to the influence of a mother or a wife; he remembers how thoughts which had lain dumb and dormant in men's brains for more

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

Another man cares only for the birth and social position of the woman to whom he gives his name and affection. To another yellow gold stands higher than blue blood, and 'my wife's father' may have been a rag-picker, so long as rag-picking had been distilled in a sufficiently rich alembic leaving a residuum admitting no kind of doubt. Venus herself without a dowry would be only a pretty seaside girl with a Newtown pippin in her hand; but Miss Kilmansegg would be something worth thinking of, if but little worth looking at.

One man delights in a smart, vivacious little woman of the irrepressible kind. It makes no difference to him how petulant she is, how full of fire and fury; the most passionate bursts of temper simply amuse him, like the anger of a canary-bird, and he holds it fine fun to watch the small virago in her tantrums, and to set her going again when he thinks she has been a long enough time in subsidence. His ideal of woman is an amusing little plaything, with a great facility for being put up, and a dash of viciousness to give it piquancy. Another wants a sweet and holy saint whose patient humility springs from principle rather than from fear; another likes a blithe-tempered, healthy girl with no nonsense about her, full of fun and ready for everything, and he is not particular as to the strict order or economy of the housekeeping, provided only his wife is at all times willing to be his pleasant playmate and companion. Another delights in something very quiet, very silent, very home-staying. One must have first-rate music in his ideal woman; another, unimpeachable taste; a third, strict order; a fourth, liberal breadth of nature; and each has his own ideal, not only of nature but of person—to the exact shade of the hair, the colour of the eyes and the oval of the face. But all agree in the great fundamental requirements of truth and modesty and love and unselfishness; for though it is impossible to write of one womanly ideal as an absolute, it is very possible to detail the virtues which ought to belong to all alike.

If this diversity of ideals be true of individuals, it is especially true of nations, each of which has its own ideal woman varying according to what is called the genius of the country. To the Frenchman, if we are to believe Michelet and the novelists, it is a feverish little creature, full of nervous energy but without muscular force; of frail health and feeble organization; a prey to morbid fancies which she has no strength to control nor yet to resist; now weeping away her life in the pain of finding that her husband—a man gross and material because husband—does not understand her, now sighing over

her delicious sins in the arms of the lover who does; without reasoning faculties but with divine intuitions which are as good as revelations; without cool judgment but with the light of burning passions which guide her just as well; thinking by her heart and carrying the most refined metaphysics into her love; subtle; incomprehensible by the coarser brains of men and women who are only honest; a creature born to bewilder and to be misled, to love and to be adored, to madden men and to be destroyed by them.

It does not much signify that the reality is a shrewd, calculating, unromantic woman, with a hard face and keen eyes, who for the most part makes a good practical wife to her common-sense middle-aged husband, who thinks more of her social position than of her feelings, more of her children than of her lovers, more of her purse than of her heart, and whose great object of life is a daily struggle for centimes. It pleases the French to idealize their eminently practical and worldly-wise women into this queer compound of hysterics and adultery; and if it pleases them it need not displease us. To the German his ideal is of two kinds—one, his Martha, the domestic broad-faced Hausmutter, who cooks good dinners at small cost, and mends the family linen as religiously as if this were the Eleventh Commandment specially appointed for feminine fingers to keep, the poetic culmination of whom is Charlotte cutting bread and butter; the other, his Mary, his Bettina, full of mind and æsthetics and heart-uplifting love, yearning after the infinite with holes in her stockings and her shoes down at heel. For what are coarse material mendings to the æsthetic soul yearning after the Infinite and worshipping at the feet of the prophet?

In Italy the ideal woman of late times was the ardent patriot, full of active energy, of physical force, of dauntless courage. In Poland it is the patriot too, but of a more refined and etherealized type, passively resenting Tartar tyranny by the subtlest feminine scorn, and living in perpetual music and mourning. In Spain it is a woman beautiful and impassioned, with the slight drawback of needing a world of looking after, of which the men are undeniably capable. In Mohammedan countries generally it is a comely smooth-skinned Dudù, patient and submissive, always in good humour with her master, economical in house-living to please the meanness, and gorgeous in occasional attire to gratify the ostentation, of the genuine Oriental; but by no means Dudù ever asleep and unoccupied. For, if not allowed to take part in active outside life, the Eastern's wife or wives have their home duties and their maternal cares like all other women, and find to their cost that, if they unduly neglect them, they will have a bad time of it with Ali Ben Hassan when the question comes of piastres and sequins, and the dogs of Jews who demand payment, and the pigs of Christians who follow suit.

The American ideal is of two kinds, like the German—the one, the clever manager, the woman with good executive faculty in the matters of buckwheat cakes and oyster gumbo, as is needed in a country so poorly provided with 'helps;' the other, the aspiring

soul who puts her aspirations into deeds, and goes out into the world to do battle with the sins of society as editress, preacher, stump-orator and the like. It must be rather embarrassing to some men that this special manifestation of the ideal woman at times advocates miscegenation and free love; but perhaps we of the narrow old conventional type are not up to the right mark yet, and have to wait until our own women are thoroughly emancipated before we can rightly appreciate these questions. At all events, if this kind of thing pleases the Americans, it is no more our business to interfere with them than with the French compound; and if miscegenation and free love seem to them the right manner of life, let them follow it.

In all countries, then, the ideal woman changes, chameleon-like, to suit the taste of men; and the great doctrine that her happiness does somewhat depend on his liking is part of the very foundation of her existence. According to his will she is bond or free, educated or ignorant, lax or strict, housekeeping or roving; and though we advocate neither the bondage nor the ignorance, yet we do hold to the principle that, by the laws which regulate all human communities everywhere, she is bound to study the wishes of man and to mould her life in harmony with his liking. No society can get on in which there is total independence of sections and members, for society is built up on the mutual dependence of all its sections and all its members. Hence the defiant attitude which women have lately assumed, and their indifference to the wishes and remonstrances of men, cannot lead to any good results whatever. It is not the revolt of slaves against their tyrants which they have begun—in that we could sympathize—but it is a revolt against their duties.

And this it is which makes the present state of things so deplorable. It is the vague restlessness, the fierce extravagance, the neglect of home, the indolent fine-ladyism, the passionate love of pleasure which characterises the modern woman, that saddens men and destroys in them that respect which their very pride prompts them to feel. And it is the painful conviction that the ideal woman of truth and modesty and simple love and homely living has somehow faded away under the paint and tinsel of this modern reality which makes us speak out as we have done, in the hope—perhaps a forlorn one—that if she could be made to thoroughly understand what men think of her, she would, by the very force of natural instinct and social necessity, order herself in some accordance with the lost ideal, and become again what we once loved and what we all regret.

The Girl of the Period and Other Social Essays, Vol. I by Eliza Lynn Linton

PINCHBECK.

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

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

turn. The whole of the lower section of the middle-classes is penetrated through and through with the worship of pinchbeck; and for one family that holds itself in the honour and simplicity of truth, ten thousand lie, to the world and to themselves, in frippery and pretence.

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

In dress it is the same thing. She must look like her neighbours, no matter whether they can spend pounds to her shillings, so runs up a milliner's bill beyond what she ought to afford for the whole family expenses. If others can buy gold, she can manage pinchbeck. Glass that looks like jet, like filagree work, like anything else she fancies, is every bit to her as good as the real thing; and if she cannot compass Valenciennes and Mechlin, she can go to Nottingham and buy machine-made imitations that will make quite as fine a show. How poor soever she may be, she must hang herself about with ornaments made of painted wood, of glass, of vulcanite; she must break out into spangles and beads and chains and benoîtons, which are cheap luxuries and, as she thinks, effective decorations. Flimsy silks make as rich a rustle to her ear as the stateliest brocade; and cotton velvet

delights the soul that cannot aspire to Genoa. The love of pinchbeck is so deeply ingrained in her that even if, in a momentary fit of aberration into good taste, she condescends to a simple material about which there can be neither disguise nor pretence, she must load it with that detestable cheap finery of hers till she makes herself as vulgar in a muslin as she was in a cotton velvet. The simplex munditiis, which used to be held as a canon of feminine good taste, is now abandoned altogether, and the more she can bedizen herself according to the pattern of a Sandwich islander the more beautiful she thinks herself—the more certain the fascination of the men and the greater the jealousy of the women. This is the cause of all the tags and streamers, the bits of ribbon here and flying ends of laces there, the puffed-out chignons, and the trailing curls cut off some dead girl's head, wherewith the modern Englishwoman delights to make herself hideous. It is pinchbeck throughout.

But we fear woman is past praying for in the matter of fashion; and that she is too far given over to the abomination of pretence to be called back to truth for any ethical reason whatsoever, or indeed by anything short of high examples. And then, if simplicity became the fashion, we should have our pinchbeck votaries translating that into extremes as they do now with ornamentation; if my lady took to plainness, they would go to nakedness.

Another bit of pinchbeck is the visiting-list—the cards of invitation stuck against the drawing-room glass—with the grandest names and largest fortunes put forward, irrespective of dates or tenses. The chance contact with the people represented may be quite out of the ordinary circumstances of life, but their names are paraded as if an accident, which has happened once and may never occur again, were in the daily order of events. They are brought to the front to make others believe that the whole social substance is of the same quality; that generals and admirals and lords and ladies are the common elements of the special circle in which the family habitually moves; that pinchbeck is good gold, and that 'composition' means marble. Women are exceedingly tenacious of these pasteboard appearances. In a house with its couple of female servants, where formal visitors are very rare and invitations, save by friendly word of mouth, rarer still, you may see a cracked china bowl or cheap mock patera on the hall table, to receive the cards which are assumed to come in the thick showers usual with high people who have hall-porters and a thousand names or more on their books. The pile gets horribly dusty to be sure, and the upper layer turns by degrees from cream-colour to brown; but antiquity is not held to weaken the force of grandeur. The titled card left on a chance occasion more than a year ago still keeps the uppermost place, still represents a perpetual renewal of aristocratic visits and an unbroken succession of social triumphs. Yellowed and soiled, it is none the less the trump-card of the list; and while the outside world laughs and ridicules, the lady at home thinks that no one sees through this puerile pretence, and that the visiting-list is accepted according to the

status of the fugleman at the head. She is very happy if she can say that the pattern of her dress, her cap, her bonnet, was taken from that of Lady So and So's; and we may be quite sure that all personal contact with grand folks so expresses itself and perpetuates the memory of the event, by such imitation—at a distance. It is too good an occasion for the airing of pinchbeck to be disregarded; consequently, for the most part it is turned to this practical account. Whether the fashion be suited to the material or to the other parts of the dress, is quite a secondary consideration; it being of the essence of pinchbeck to despise both fitness and harmony.

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

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

brooches may seem but small material causes for important moral effects, but they are symbols; and, as symbols, they are of deep national value.

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

The Girl of the Period and Other Social Essays, Vol. I by Eliza Lynn Linton

AFFRONTED WOMANHOOD.

Amongst other queer anomalies in human nature is the difference that lies between sectarian sins and personal immoralities, between the intellectual untruth of a man's creed and the spiritual evil of his own nature. Rigid Calvinism, for instance, which narrows the issues of divine grace and shuts up the avenues of salvation from all but a select few, is a sour and illiberal faith; and yet a rigid Calvinist, simply continuing to believe in predestination and election as he was taught from the beginning, may be a generous, genial, large-hearted man. An inventor scheming out the deadliest projectile that has yet been devised is not necessarily indifferent to human life on his own account; nor is every American who talks tall talk about the glorious destinies of his country and the infinite superiority of his countrymen, as conceited personally as he is vainglorious nationally. In fact, he may be a very modest fellow by his own fireside; and though in his quality of American he is of course able to whip universal creation, in his mere quality of man he is quite ready to take the lower seat at the table and to give honour where honour is due.

This kind of distinction between the faults of the sect and the person, the nature and the cause, is very noticeable in women; and especially in all things relating to themselves. Individually, many among them are meek and long-suffering enough, and would be as little capable of resenting a wrong as of revenging it. Being used from the cradle to a good deal of snubbing, they take to it kindly as part of the inevitable order of things, and kiss the chastening rod with edifying humility; but, collectively, they are the most impatient of rebuke, the most arrogant in moral attitude, and the most restive of all created things sought to be led or driven. The woman who will bear to hear of her personal faults without offering a word in self-defence, and who will even say peccavi quite humbly if hard pressed, fires up into illimitable indignation when told that her foibles are characteristic of her sex, and that she is no worse than nature meant her to be. Personally she is willing to confess that she is only a poor worm grovelling in the dust—perhaps an exceptionally poor worm, if of the kind given to spiritual asceticism—but by her class she claims to be considered next door to an angel, and arrogates to her sex virtues which she would blush to claim on her own behalf.

Men, as men, are all sorts of bad things, as every one knows. They are selfish, cruel, tyrannical, sensual, unjust, bloodthirsty—where does the list end? and human nature in the abstract is a bad thing too, given over to lies and various deadly lusts; but women, as women, are exempt from any special share in the general iniquity, and only come under the ban with universal nature—with lambs and doves and other pretty creatures—

not quite perfection, because of the Fall which spoilt everything, and yet very near it. As children of the rash parents who corrupted the race they certainly suffer from the general infection of sin that followed, but, as daughters contrasted with the sons, they are so far superior to those evil-minded brethren of theirs that their comparative virtues by sex override their positive vices by race. As individuals, they are worms; as human beings, they are poor sinful souls; but by their womanhood they are above rebuke.

Women have been so long wrapped in this pleasant little delusion about the sacredness of their sex, and the perfections belonging thereto by nature, that any attempt to show them the truth and convince them that they too are guilty of the mean faults and petty ways common to a fallen humanity—whereof certain manifestations are special to themselves—is met with the profound scorn or shrill cries of affronted womanhood. A man who speaks of their faults as they appear to him, and as he suffers by them, is illiberal and unmanly, and the rage of the more hysterically indignant would not be very far below that of the Thracian Mænads, could they lay hands on the offending Orpheus of the moment; but a woman who speaks from knowledge, and touches the weak places and the sore spots known best to the initiated, is a traitress even baser than the rude man who perhaps knows no better.

The whole life and being of womanhood must be held sacred from censure, exalted as it is by a kind of sentimental apotheosis that will not bear reasoning about, to something very near divinity. Even the follies of fashion must be exempt from both ridicule and rebuke, on the ground of man's utter ignorance of the merits of the question; for how should a poor male body know anything about trains or crinolines, or the pleasure that a woman feels in making herself ridiculous or indecent in appearance and a nuisance to her neighbours? while, for anything graver than the follies of fashion, it is in a manner high treason against the supremacy of the sex to assume that they deserve either ridicule or rebuke. Besides, it is indelicate. Women are made to be worshipped, not criticized; to be reverenced as something mystically holy and incomprehensible by the grosser masculine faculties; and it is indiscreet, to say the least of it, when vile man takes it on himself to test the idol by the hard mechanical tests of truth and common-sense, and to show the world how much alloy is mingled with the gold.

This is in ethics what the Oriental's reserve about his harem is in domestic life. The sacredness of a Mohammedan's womankind must be so complete that they are even nameless to the coarser sex; and not, 'How is your wife?' 'How are your daughters?' but, 'How is your house?' is the only accepted form of words by which Ali may ask Hassan about the health of his Fatimas and Zuliekas. In much the same way our women must be kept behind the close gilded gratings of affected perfectness, and, above all things, never publicly discussed—much less publicly condemned.

It is by no means a proof of wisdom, or of the power of logically reasoning out a position and its consequences, that women should thus demand to be treated as things superior to the faults and follies of humanity at large. They are clamouring loudly, and with some justice, for an equal share in the world's work and wages, and it is wonderfully stupid in them to stand on their womanly dignity and their quasi-sacredness, when told of their faults and measured according to their shortcomings, not their pretensions. If they come down into the arena to fight, they must fight subject to the conditions of the arena. They must not ask for special rules to be made in their behalf—for blunted weapons on the one side and impregnable defences on the other. If they demand either mystic reverence or chivalric homage they must be content with their own narrow but safe enclosure, where they have nothing to do but to look at the turmoil below, and accept with gratitude such portions of the good things fought for as the men to whom they belong see fit to bring them. They cannot at one and the same time have the good of both positions—the courtesy claimed by weakness and the honour paid to prowess. If they mingle in the mêlée they must expect as hard knocks as the rest, and must submit to be bullied when they hit foul and to be struck home when they hit wide. If they do not like these conditions, let them keep out of the fray altogether; but if they choose to mingle in it, no hysterics of affronted womanhood, however loud the shrieks, will keep them safe from hard knocks and rough treatment.

Time out of mind women have been credited with all the graces and virtues possible in a world which 'the trail of the serpent' has defiled. To be sure they have been cursed as well, as the causes of most of the miseries of society from Eve's time to Helen's, and later still. Teterrima causa. But the praise alone sticks, so far as their own self-belief is concerned, and men, who create the curses, may arrange them to their own liking. The poet says they are 'ministering angels;' the very name of mother is to some men almost as holy as that of God, and the most solemn oath a Frenchman can take in a private way is not by his own honour, but by the name or the head or the life of his mother.

As wives—well, save in the old nursery doggrel which sets forth that they are made of 'all that's good if well understood'—as wives certainly they get not a few ungentle rubs. But then only a husband knows where the shoe pinches, and if he blasphemes during the wearing of it, on his own head be the guilt as is already the punishment. As maidens they are confessedly the most sacred manifestation of humanity, and to be approached with the reverence rightfully due to the holiest thing we know; while in the new spiritualistic world we are told to look for the time when the moral supremacy of woman shall be the recognized law of human life and the reign of violence and tears and all iniquity shall therefore be at an end. Thus the moral loveliness of collective womanhood is a dogma which men are taught from their boyhood as an article of faith if not a matter of experience, and women naturally keep them up to the mark—theoretically, at all events. Yet for all this lip-homage, of which so much account is made, women are often

ill-used and brutalized, and in spite of their superior pretensions as often fall below men in every quality but that of patience. And patience is eminently the virtue of weakness, and therefore woman's cardinal grace; speaking broadly and allowing for exceptions. But what women do not see is that all this poetic flattery comes originally from the idealizing passion of men, and that, left to themselves, with only each other for critics and analyzers, they would soon find themselves stripped of their superfluous moral finery and reduced to the bare core of uncompromising truth. And this would be the best thing for them in the end. If they could but rise superior to the weakness of flattery, they would rise beyond the power of much that now degrades them. If they would but honestly consider the question of their own shortcomings when told where they fail, and what they cannot do, and what they will be sure to make a mess of if they attempt, they would prove their title to man's respect far more than they prove it now by the shrill cries and indignant remonstrances of affronted womanhood.

This is the day of trial for many things—among others, for the capacity of women for an enlarged sphere of action and more public exercise of power. Do women think they show their fitness for nobler duties than those already assigned them, by their impatience under censure, which is, after all, but one mode of teaching? Are they qualifying themselves to act in concert with men, by assuming an absolute moral supremacy which it is a kind of sacrilege to deny? If they think they are on the right road as at present followed, let them go on in heaven's name. When they have wandered sufficiently far perhaps they will have sense enough to turn back, and see for themselves what mistakes they have made and might have avoided, had they had the wisdom of self-knowledge in only a small degree. Certainly, so long as womanhood is held to confer, per se, a special and unassailable divinity, so long will women be rendered comparatively incapable of the best work through vanity, through ignorance, and through impatience of the teaching that comes by rebuke. Nothing is so damaging in the long run as exaggerated pretensions; for by-and-by, after a certain period of uncritical homage, the world is sure to believe that the silver veil which it has so long respected hides deformity, not divinity, and that what is too sacred for public use is too poor for public honour. If the faults of women are not to be discussed, nor their follies condemned, because womanhood is a sacred thing and a man naturally respects his mother and sisters, then women must be content to live in a moral harem, where they will be safe from both the gaze and the censure of the outside world; they must not come down into the battle-fields and the workshops, where they forfeit all claim to protection and have to accept the man's law of 'no favour.' It must be one thing or the other. Either their merits must be weighed and their capacity assayed in reference to the place they want to take—and in doing this their faults must be boldly and distinctly discussed—or they must be content with their present condition; and, with the mystic sanctity of their womanhood, they must accept also its moral seclusion—belonging, by their very nature, to things too sacred for criticism and too perfect for censure. It rests with themselves to decide which it is to be.

The Girl of the Period and Other Social Essays, Vol. I by Eliza Lynn Linton

FEMININE AFFECTATIONS.

The old form of feminine affectation used to be that of a die-away fine lady afflicted with a mysterious malady known by the name of the vapours, or one, no less obscure, called the spleen. Sometimes it was an etherealized being who had no capacity for homely things, but who passed her life in an atmosphere of poetry and music, for the most part expressing her vague ideas in halting rhymes which gave more satisfaction to herself than to her friends. She was probably an Italian scholar and could quote Petrarch and Tasso, and did quote them pretty often; she might even be a Della Cruscan by honourable election, with her own peculiar wreath of laurel and her own silver lyre; any way she was 'a sister of the Muses,' and had something to do with Apollo or Minerva, whom she was sure to call Phœbus or Pallas Athene, as being the more poetical name of the two. Probably she had dealings with Diana too—for this kind of woman does not in any age affect the 'seaborn,' save in a hazy sentimental way that bears no fruits—a neatly-turned sonnet or a clever bit of counterpoint being to her worth all the manly love or fireside home delights that the world can give. What is the touch of babies' dimpled fingers or the rosy kisses of babies' lips compared to the pleasures of being a sister of the Muses and one of the beloved of Apollo! The Della Cruscan of former days, or her modern avatar, will tell you that music and poetry are godlike and bear the soul away to heaven, but that the nursery is a prison and babies are no dearer gaolers than any other; and that household duties disgrace the aspiring soul mounting to the empyrean. This was the Ethereal Being of last generation—the Blue-stocking, as a poetess in white satin, with her eyes turned up to heaven and her hair in dishevelled cascades about her neck. She dropped her mantle as she finally departed; and we still have the Della Cruscan essence, if not in the precise form of earlier times. We still have ethereal beings who, as the practical outcome of their etherealization, rave about music and poetry and æsthetics and culture, and horribly neglect their babies and the weekly bills.

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

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

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

In contrast with this special affectation is the mannish woman—the woman who wears a double-breasted coat with big buttons, of which she flings back the lappels with an air, understanding the suggestiveness of a wide chest and the need of unchecked breathing; who wears unmistakeable shirt-fronts, linen collars, vests and plain ties, like a man; who folds her arms or sets them akimbo, like a man; who even nurses her feet and cradles her knees, in spite of her petticoats, and makes believe that the attitude is comfortable because it is manlike. If the excessively womanly woman is affected in her sickly

sweetness, the mannish woman is affected in her breadth and roughness. She adores dogs and horses, which she places far above children of all ages. She boasts of how good a marksman she is—she does not call herself markswoman—and how she can hit right and left and bring down both birds flying. When she drinks wine she holds the stem of the glass between her first two fingers, hollows her underlip, and, throwing her head well back, tosses off the whole at a draught—she would disdain the lady-like sip or the closer gesture of ordinary women. She is great in cheese and bitter-beer, in claret-cup and still champagne, but she despises the puerilities of sweets or of effervescing wines. She rounds her elbows and turns her wrist outward, as men round their elbows and turn their wrists outward. She is fond of carpentry, she says, and boasts of her powers with the plane and saw. For charms to her watch-chain she wears a cork-screw, a gimlet, a big knife and a small foot-rule; and in contrast with the intensely womanly woman, who uses the tips of her fingers only, the mannish woman when she does anything uses the whole hand, and if she had to thread a needle would thread it as much by her palm as by her fingers. All of which is affectation—from first to last affectation; a mere assumption of virile fashions utterly inharmonious to the whole being, physical and mental, of a woman.

Then there is the affectation of the woman who has taken propriety and orthodoxy under her special protection, and who regards it as a personal insult when her friends and acquaintances go beyond the exact limits of her mental sphere. This is the woman who assumes to be the antiseptic element in society; who makes believe that without her the world and human nature would go to the dogs and plunge headlong into the abyss of sin and destruction forthwith; and that not all the grand heroism of man, not all his thought and energy and high endeavour and patient seeking after truth would serve his turn or the world's if she did not spread her own petty preserving nets, and mark out the boundary lines within which she would confine the range of thought and speculation. She knows that this assumption of spiritual beadledom is mere affectation, and that other minds have as much right to their own boundary lines as that which she claims for herself: but it seems to her pretty to assume that woman generally is the consecrated beadle of thought and morality, and that she, of all women, is most specially consecrated. As an offshoot of this kind stands the affectation of simplicity—the woman whose mental attitude is self-depreciation, and who poses herself as a mere nobody when the world is ringing with her praises. 'Is it possible that your Grace has ever heard of me?' said one of this class with prettily affected naïveté at a time when all England was astir about her, and when colours and fashions went by her name to make them take with the public at large. No one knew better than the fair ingénue in question how far and wide her fame had spread; but she thought it looked modest and simple to assume ignorance of her own value, and to declare that she was but a creeping worm when all the world knew that she was a soaring butterfly.

There is a certain like kind of affectation very common among pretty women; and this is the affectation of not knowing that they are pretty, and not recognizing the effect of their beauty on men. Take a woman with bewildering eyes, say, of a maddening size and shape and fringed with long lashes which distract you to look at; the creature knows that her eyes are bewildering, as well as she knows that fire burns and that ice melts; she knows the effect of that trick she has with them—the sudden uplifting of the heavy lid and the swift, full gaze that she gives right into a man's eyes. She has practised it often in the glass, and knows to a mathematical nicety the exact height to which the lid must be raised and the exact fixity of the gaze. She knows the whole meaning of the look and the stirring of men's blood that it creates; but if you speak to her of the effect of her trick, she puts on an air of extremest innocence, and protests her entire ignorance as to anything her eyes may say or mean; and if you press her hard she will look at you in the same way for your own benefit, and deny at the very moment of offence. Various other tricks has she with those bewildering eyes of hers—each more perilous than the other to men's peace; and all unsparingly employed, no matter what the result. For this is the woman who flirts to the extreme limits, then suddenly draws up and says she meant nothing. Step by step she has led you on, with looks and smiles and pretty doubtful phrases always susceptible of two meanings—the one for the ear by mere word, the other for the heart by the accompaniments of look and manner, which are intangible; step by step she has drawn you deeper and deeper into the maze where she has gone before as your decoy; then, when she has you safe, she raises her eyes for the last time, complains that you have mistaken her cruelly and that she has meant nothing more than any one else might mean; and what can she do to repair her mistake? Love you? marry you? No; she is engaged to your rival, who counts his thousands to your hundreds; and what a pity that you had not seen this all along and that you should have so misunderstood her! Besides, what is there about her that you or any one should love?

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

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

might by chance be dangerous even then if the 'Indian summer' were specially bright and warm.

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

Go where we will, the affectation of being something she is not meets us in woman, like a ghost we cannot lay, a mist we cannot sweep away. In the holiest and the most trivial things we find it penetrating everywhere—even in church and at her prayers, when the pretty penitent, rising from her lengthy orisons, lifts her eyes and furtively looks about to see who has noticed her self-abasement and to whom her picturesque piety has commended itself. All sorts and patterns of good girls and pleasant women are very dear and delightful; but the pearl of great price is the thoroughly natural and unaffected woman—that is, the woman who is truthful to her heart's core, and who would as little condescend to act a pretence as she would dare to tell a lie.

The Girl of the Period and Other Social Essays, Vol. I by Eliza Lynn Linton

INTERFERENCE.

About the strongest propensity in human nature, apart from the purely personal instincts, is the propensity to interfere. We do not mean tyranny; that is another matter—tyranny being active while interference is negative—the one standing as the masculine, the other as the feminine, form of the same principle. Besides, tyranny has generally some personal gain in view when it takes it in hand to force people to do what they dislike to do; while interference seeks no good for itself at all, but simply prevents the exercise of free-will for the mere pleasure to be had out of such prevention.

Again, the idea of tyranny is political rather than domestic; but the curse of interference is seen most distinctly within the four walls of home, where also it is most felt. Very many people spend their lives in interfering with others—perpetually putting spokes into wheels with the turning of which they have nothing to do, and thrusting their fingers into pies about the baking of which they are in no way concerned; and of these people we are bound to confess that women make up the larger number and are the greater sinners. To be sure there are some men—small, fussy, finnicking fellows, with whom nature has made the irreparable blunder of sex—who are as troublesome in their endless interference as the narrowest-minded and most meddling women of their acquaintance; but the feminine characteristics of men are so exceptional that we need not take them into serious calculation. For the most part, when men do interfere in any manly sense at all, it is with such things as they think they have a right to control—say, with the wife's low dresses or the daughter's too patent flirtations. They interfere and prevent because they are jealous of the repute, perhaps of the beauty, of their womankind; and, knowing what other men say of such displays, or fearing their effect, they stand between folly and slander to the best of their ability. But this kind of interference, noble or ignoble as the cause may be, comes into another class of motives altogether and does not belong to that kind of interference of which we are speaking.

Women, then, are the great interferers at home, both with each other and with men. They do not tell us what we are to do, beyond going to church and subscribing to their favourite mission, so much as they tell us what we are not to do. They do not command so much as they forbid. And, of all women, wives and daughters are the most given to handling these check-strings and putting on these drag-chains. Sisters, while young, are obliged to be less interfering, under pain of a perpetual round of bickering; for brothers are not apt to submit to the counsel of creatures for the most part so loftily snubbed as sisters; while mothers nine times out of ten are laid aside for all but sentimental purposes, so soon as the son has ceased to be a boy and has learned to become a man. The queenhood, therefore, of personal and domestic interference lies with wives, and they know how to use the prerogative they assume. Take an unlucky man who smokes under protest—his wife not liking to forbid the pleasure entirely, but always grudging it and interfering with its exercise. Each cigar represents a battle, deepening in intensity

according to the number. The first may have been had with only a light skirmish—perhaps a mere threatening of an attack that passed away without coming to actual onslaught; the second brings up the artillery; while the third or fourth lets all the forces loose, and sets the big guns thundering. She could understand a man smoking one cigar in the day, she says, with a gracious condescension to masculine weakness; but when it comes to more she feels that she is called on to interfere, and to do her best towards checking such a reprehensible excess. It does not weaken her position that she knows nothing of what she is talking about. She never smoked a cigar herself, therefore does not understand the uses nor the abuses of tobacco; but she holds herself pledged to interfere so soon as she gets the chance; and she redeems that pledge with energy.

The man too, who has the stomach of an ostrich and an appetite to correspond, but about whom the home superstition is that he has a feeble digestion and must take care of his diet, has also to run the gauntlet of his wife's interfering forces. He never dines nor sups jollily with his friends without being plucked at and reminded that salmon always disagrees with him; that champagne is sure to give him a headache to-morrow; and, 'My dear! when you know how bad salad is for you!' or, 'How can you eat that horrid pastry? You will be so ill in the night!' 'What! more wine? another glass of whisky? how foolish you are! how wrong!' The wife has a nervous organization which cannot bear stimulants; the husband is a strong, large-framed man who can drink deep without feeling it; but to the excitable woman her feeble limit is her husband's measure, and when he has gone beyond the range of her own short tether, she trots after him remonstrating, and thinks herself justified in interfering with his further progress. For women cannot be brought to understand the capacities of a man's life; they cannot be made to understand that what is bad for themselves may not be bad for others, and that their weakness ought not to be the gauge of a man's strength.

A pale, chilly woman, afflicted with chronic bronchitis, who wears furs and velvets in May and fears the east wind as much as an East Indian fears a tiger, does her best to coddle her husband, father, sons, in about the same ratio as she coddles herself. They must not go out without an overcoat; they must take an umbrella if the day is at all cloudy; they must not walk too far nor ride too hard; and they must be sure to be at home by a given hour.

When such women as these have to do with men just on the boundary-line between the last days of vigour and the first of old age, they put forward the time of old age by many years. We see their men rapidly sink into the softness and incapacity of senility, when a more bracing life would have kept them good for half-a-dozen years longer. But women do not care for this. They like men to be their own companions and dread rather than desire the masculine comradeship which would keep them up to the mark of virile independence; for most women—but not all—would rather have their husbands manly

in a womanly way than in a manly one, as being more within the compass of their own sympathies and understanding.

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

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

If Emma goes to her embroidery, Ellen tells her she ought to practise her singing; if Jane is reading, Mary recommends sewing as a more profitable use of precious time; if Amy is at her easel, Ada wants to turn her round to the piano. It is quite the exception where four or five sisters leave each other free to do as each likes, and do not take to drilling and interference as part of the daily programme.

Something of the reluctance to domestic service, so painfully apparent among the better class of working women, is due to this spirit of interference with women. The lady who wrote about the caps and gowns of servant-girls, and drew out a plan of dress, down to the very material of their gloves, was an instance of this spirit. For, when we come to analyze it, what does it really signify to us how our servants dress, so long as they are clean and decent and do not let their garments damage our goods? Fashion is almost always ridiculous, and women, as a rule, care more for dress than they care for anything else; and if the kitchen apes the parlour, and Phyllis gives as much thought to her new linsey as my lady gives to her new velvet, we cannot wonder at it, nor need we hold up our hands in horror at the depravity of the smaller person. Does one flight of stairs transpose morality? If it does not, there is no real ethical reason why my lady should interfere with poor Phyllis's enjoyment in her ugly little vanities, when she herself will not be interfered with—though press and pulpit both try to turn her out of her present path into the way which all ages have thought the best for her and the one naturally appointed. It is a thing that will not bear reasoning on, being simply a form of the old 'who will guard the guardian?' Who will direct the directress? and to whose interference will the interferer submit?

There are two causes for this excessive love of interference among women. The one is the narrowness of their lives and objects, by which insignificant things gain a disproportionate value in their eyes; the other, their belief that they are the only saviours of society, and that without them man would become hopelessly corrupt. And to a certain extent this belief is true; but surely with restrictions! Because the clearer moral sense and greater physical weakness of women restrain men's fiercer passions and force them to be gentle and considerate, women are not, therefore, the sole arbiters of masculine life into whose hands is given the paying out of just so much rope as they think fit for the occasion. They would do better to look to their own tackle before settling so exactly the run of others; and if ever their desired time of equality is to come, it must come through mutual independence, not through womanly interference, and as much liberality and breadth given as demanded:—which, so far as humanity has gone hitherto, has not been the feminine manner of squaring accounts.

Grant that women are the salt of the earth and the great antiseptic element in society, still that does not reduce everything else to the verge of corruption which they alone prevent. Yet they evidently think that it is so, and that they are each and all the keepers

of keys which give them a special entrance to the temple of morality, and by which they are able to exclude or admit the grosser body of men. Hence they interfere and restrict and pay out just so much rope, and measure off just so much gambolling ground, as they think fit; then think vile man a horribly wicked invention when he takes things into his own hand and goes beyond their boundary-lines. It is all done in good if in a very narrow faith—that we admit willingly; but we would call their attention to the difference there is between influence and interference; which is just the difference between their ideal duty and their daily practice—between being the salt of the earth and the blister of the home.

We think it only justice to put in a word for those poor henpecked fellows of husbands at a time when the whole cry is for Woman's Rights, which seems to mean chiefly her right of making man knuckle under on all occasions and of making one will serve for two lives—and that will hers. We assure her that she would get her own way in large matters much more easily if she would leave men more liberty in small ones, and not teaze them by interfering in things which do not concern her and have only reference to themselves.

The Girl of the Period and Other Social Essays, Vol. I by Eliza Lynn Linton

THE FASHIONABLE WOMAN.

Among the many odd products of a mature civilization, the fashionable woman is one of the oddest. From first to last she is an amazing spectacle; and if we take human life in any earnestness at all, whether individually, as the passage to an eternal existence the condition of which depends on what we are here, or collectively, as the highest thing we know, we can only look in blank astonishment at the fashionable woman and her career. She is the one sole capable member of the human family without duties and without useful occupation; the one sole being who might be swept out of existence altogether, without deranging the nice arrangement of things, or upsetting the balance of inter-dependent forces. We know of no other organic creation of which this could be said; but the fashionable woman is not as other creatures, being, fortunately, sui generis, and of a type not existing elsewhere. If we take the mere ordering of her days and the employment of her time as the sign of her mental state, we may perhaps measure to a certain extent, but not fully, the depth of inanity into which she has fallen and the immensity of her folly. Considering her as a being with the potentiality of reason, of usefulness, of thought, the actual result is surely the saddest and the strangest thing under heaven!

She goes to bed at dawn and does not attempt to rise till noon. For the most part she breakfasts in bed, and then amuses herself with a cursory glance at the morning paper, if she have sufficient energy for so great a mental exertion; if she have not, she lies for another hour or two in that half-slumberous state which is so destructive to mind and body, weakening as it does both fibre and resolution, both muscle and good principle. At last she languidly rises, to be dressed in time for luncheon and her favoured intimates—the men who have the entrée at sacred hours when the world in general is forbidden. Some time later she dresses again for her drive—for the first part of the day's serious business; for paying visits and leaving cards; for buying jewelry and dresses, and ordering all sorts of unnecessary things at her milliner's; for this grand lady's ordinary 'day,' and that grand lady's extraordinary At Home; for her final slow parade in the Park, where she sees her friends as in an open air drawing-room, makes private appointments, carries on flirtations, and hears and retails gossip and scandal of a full flavour. Then she goes home to dress for tea in a 'lovely gown' of suggestive piquancy; to be followed by dinner, the opera or a concert, a soirée, or perhaps a ball or two; whence she returns towards morning, flushed with excitement or worn out with fatigue, feverish or nervous, as she has had pleasure and success or disappointment and annoyance.

This is her outside life; and this is no fancy picture and no exaggeration. After a certain time of such an existence, can we wonder if her complexion fades and her eyes grow dim? if that inexpressible air of haggard weariness creeps over her, which ages even a young girl and makes a mature woman substantially an old one? It is then that she has recourse to those foul and fatal expedients of which we have heard more than enough in

these latter days. She will not try simplicity of living, natural hours, wholesome occupation, unselfish endeavour, but rushes off for help to paints and cosmetics, to stimulants and drugs, and attempts to restore the tarnished freshness of her beauty by the very means which further corrode it. Every now and then, for very weariness when not for idleness, she feigns herself sick and has her favourite physician to attend her. In fact the funniest thing about her is the ease with which she takes to her bed on the slightest provocation, and the strange pleasure she seems to find in what is a penance to most women.

You meet her in a heated, crowded, noisy room, looking just as she always looks, whatever her normal state of health may be; and in answer to your inquiries she tells you she has only two hours ago left her bed to come here, having been confined to her room for a week, with Dr. Blank in close attendance. If you are an intimate female friend she will whisper you the name of her malady, which is sure to be something terrific, and which, if true, would have kept her a real invalid for months instead of days; but if you are only a man she will make herself out to have been very ill indeed in a more mysterious way, and leave you to wonder at the extraordinary physique of fashionable women, which enables them to live on the most friendly touch-and-go terms with death, and to overcome mortal maladies by an effort of the will and the delights of a ducal ball. The favourite physician has a hard time of it with these ladies; and the more popular he is the harder his work. It is well for his generation when he is a man of honour and integrity, and knows how to add self-respect and moral power to the qualities which have made him the general favourite. For his influence over women is almost unlimited—like nothing so much as that of the handsome Abbé of the Regency or the fascinating Monsignore of Rome; and if he chooses to abuse it and turn it to evil issues, he can. And, however great the merit in him that he does not, it does not lessen the demerit of the woman that he could.

Sometimes the fashionable woman takes up with the clergyman instead of the physician, and coquets with religious exercises rather than with drugs; but neither clergyman nor physician can change her mode of life nor give her truth nor common-sense. Sometimes there is a fluttering show of art-patronage, and the fashionable woman has a handsome painter or well-bred musician in her train, whom she pets publicly and patronizes graciously. Sometimes it is a young poet or a rising novelist, considerably honoured by the association, who dedicates his next novel to her, or writes verses in her praise, with such fervency of gratitude as sets the base Philistines on the scent of the secret—perhaps guessing not far amiss. For the fashionable woman has always some love-affair on hand, more or less platonic according to her own temperament or the boldness of the man—a love-affair in which the smallest ingredient is love; a love-affair which is vanity, idleness, a dissolute imagination and contempt of such prosaic things as morals; a love-affair not

even to be excused by the tragic frenzy of earnest passion, and which may be guilty and yet not true.

The physical effects of such a life as this are as bad as the mental, and both are as bad as the worst can make them. A feverish, overstrained condition of health either prevents the fashionable woman from being a mother at all, or makes her the mother of nervous, sickly children. Many a woman of high rank is at this moment paying bitterly for the disappointment of which she herself, in her illimitable folly, has been the sole and only cause. And, whether women like to hear it or not, it is none the less a truth that part of the reason for their being born at all is that they may in their turn bear children. The unnatural feeling against maternity existing among fashionable women is one of the worst mental signs of their state, as their frequent inability to be mothers is one of the worst physical results. This is a condition of things which no false modesty nor timid reserve should keep in the background, for it is a question of national importance, and will soon become one of national disaster unless checked by a healthier current and more natural circumstances.

Dress, dissipation and flirting make up the questionable lines which enclose the life of the fashionable woman, and which enclose nothing useful, nothing good, nothing deep nor true nor holy. Her piety is a pastime; her art the poorest pretence; her pleasure consists only in hurry and excitement alternating with debasing sloth, in heartless coquetry or in lawless indulgence, as nature made her more vain or more sensual. As a wife she fulfils no wifely duty in any grand or loving sense, for the most part regarding her husband only as a banker or an adjunct, according to the terms of her marriage settlement; as a mother she is a stranger to her children, to whom nurse and governess supply her place and give such poor makeshift for maternal love as they are enabled or inclined. In no domestic relation is she of the smallest value, and of none in any social circumstance beside the adorning of a room—if she be pretty—and the help she gives to trade through her expenditure. She lives only in the gaslight, and her nature at last becomes as artificial as her habits.

As years go on, and she changes from the acknowledged belle to la femme passée, she goes through a period of frantic endeavour to retain her youth; and even when time has clutched her with too firm a hand to be shaken off, and she begins to feel the infirmities which she still puts out all her strength to conceal, even then she grasps at the departing shadow and fresh daubs the crumbling ruin, in the belief that the world's eyes are dim and that stucco may pass for marble for another year or two longer. Or she becomes a Belgravian mother, with daughters to sell to the highest bidder; and then the aim of her life is to secure the purchaser. Her daughters are never objects of real love with the fashionable woman. They are essentially her rivals, and the idea of carrying on her life in theirs, of forgetting herself in them, occurs to her only as a forecast of death. She shrinks

even from her sons, as living evidences of the lapse of time which she cannot deny, and awkward memoria technica for fixing dates; and there is not a home presided over by a fashionable woman where the family is more than a mere name, a mere social convention loosely held together by circumstances, not by love.

Closing such a life as this comes the unhonoured end, when the miserable made-up old creature totters down into the grave where paint and padding, and glossy plaits cut from some fresh young head, are of no more avail; and where death, which makes all things real, reduces her life of lies to the nothingness it has been from the beginning. What does she leave behind her? A memory by which her children may order their own lives in proud assurance that so they will order them best for virtue and for honour? Or a memory which speaks to them of time misused, of duties unfulfilled, of love discarded for pleasure, and of a life-long sacrifice of all things good and pure for selfishness?

We all know examples of the worldly old woman clinging batlike to the last to the old roofs and rafters; and we all know how heartily we despise her, and how we ridicule her in our hearts, if not by our words. If the reigning queens of fashion, at present young and beautiful, would but remember that they are only that worldly old woman in embryo, and that in a very few years they will be her exact likeness, unhappily repeated for the scorn of the world once more to follow! The traditional skeleton at the feast had a wonderfully wise meaning, crude and gross as it was in form. For though its memento mori, too constantly before us, would either sadden or brutalize, as we were thoughtful or licentious, yet it is good to see the end of ourselves, and to study the meaning and lesson of our lives in those of our prototypes and elder likenesses.

The pleasures of the world are, as we all know, very potent and very alluring, but nothing can be more unsatisfying if taken as the main purpose of life. While we are young, the mere stirring of the blood stands instead of anything more real; but as we go on, and the pulse flags and pleasurable occasions get rare and more rare, we find that we have been like the Prodigal Son, and that our food and his have been out of much the same trough, and come in the main to much the same thing.

This is an age of extraordinary wealth and of corresponding extraordinary luxury; of unparalleled restlessness, which is not the same thing as activity or energy, but which is the kind of restlessness that disdains all quiet and repose, as unendurable stagnation. Hence the fashionable woman of the day is one of extremes in her own line also; and the idleness, the heartlessness, the self-indulgence, the want of high morality, and the insolent luxury at all times characteristic of her were never displayed with more cynical effrontery than at present, and never called for more severe condemnation.

The fashionable women of Greece and Rome, of Italy and France, have left behind them names which the world has made typical of the vices naturally engendered by idleness and luxury. But do we wish that our women should become subjects for an English Juvenal? that fashion should create a race of Laïses and Messalinas, of Lucrezia Borgias and Madame du Barrys, out of the stock which once gave us Lucy Hutchinson and Elizabeth Fry? Once the name of Englishwoman carried with it a grave and noble echo as the name of women known for their gentle bearing and their blameless honour—of women who loved their husbands, and brought up about their own knees the children they were not reluctant to bear and not ashamed to love. Now, it too often means a girl of the period, a frisky matron, a fashionable woman—a thing of paints and pads, consorting with dealers of no doubtful calling for the purchase of what she grimly calls 'beauty,' making pleasure her only good and the world her highest god. It too often means a woman who is not ashamed to supplement her husband with a lover, but who is unwilling to become the honest mother of that husband's children. It too often means a hybrid creature, perverted out of the natural way altogether, affecting the license but ignorant of the strength of a man; as girl or woman alike valueless so far as her highest natural duties are concerned; and talking largely of liberty while showing at every turn how much she fails in that co-essential of liberty—knowledge how to use it.

SLEEPING DOGS.

There is a capital old proverb, often quoted but not so often acted on, called 'Let sleeping dogs lie;' a proverb which, if we were to abide by its injunction, would keep us out of many a mess that we get into now, because we cannot let well alone. Certainly we fall into trouble sometimes, or rather we drift into it—we allow it to gather round us—for want of a frank explanation to clear off small misunderstandings. At least novelists say so, and then make a great point of the anguish endured by Henry and Angelina for three mortal volumes, because they were too stupid to ask the reason why the one looked cold the other evening at the duchess's ball, and the other looked shy the next morning in the park. But then novelists, poor souls, are driven to such extravagant expedients for motives and matter, that we can scarcely take them as rational exponents of real life in any way; though the very meaning and final cause of their profession is to depict human nature as it is, and to show the reflex action of character and circumstances somewhat according to the pattern set out in the actual world. But, leaving novelists alone, on the whole we find in real life that if speech is silvern, silence is essentially golden, and that more harm is done by saying too much than by saying too little; above all, that infinite mischief arises by not letting sleeping dogs lie.

People are so wonderfully anxious to stir up the dregs of everything, they can never let things rest. Take a man or woman who has done something queer that gets noised abroad, and who is coldly looked on in consequence by those who believe the worst reports which arise as interpretations. Now the wisest thing undoubtedly is to bear this coldness as the righteous punishment of that folly, and to trust for rehabilitation to the mysterious process called 'living it down.' If there has been absolutely no sinfulness to speak of, nothing but a little imprudence and a big glossary of scandalous explanation, a little precipitancy and a great deal of ill-nature, by all means wake up the sleeping dog and set him howling through the streets. He may do good, seeing that truth would be your friend. But if there be a core of ugly fact, even if it be not quite so ugly as the envelope which rumour has wrapped round it, then fall back on the dignity of 'living it down,' and let the dog lie sleeping and muzzled.

There is another, but an unsavoury saying, which advises against the stirring up of evil odours; but this is just what imprudent, high-spirited people will not understand. They will take their own way in spite of society and all its laws; they will kick over the traces when it suits them; they will do this and that of which the world says authoritatively, 'No, you shall not do it;' and then, when the day of wrath arrives, and down comes the whip on the offending back, they shriek piteously and wake up all the dogs in the town in the 'investigation of their case.' And a queer kennel enough they turn out sometimes!

They would have done better to put up with their social thrashing than to have set the bloodhounds of 'investigation' on their heels.

Actions for libel often do this kind of thing, as every one may read for himself. Many a man who gets his farthing damages had better have borne the surly growl of the only half-roused dog, than have retaliated, and so waked him up. The farthing damages, representing say a cuff on the head or a kick in the ribs, or a milder 'Lie down, sir!' may be very pleasant to the feelings of the yelped-at, as so much revenge exacted—Shylock's pound of flesh, without the blood. But what about the consequences? what about the disclosure of your secret follies and the uncovering of the foundations on which the libel rested? The foundations remain immoveable to the end of time if the superstructure be disroofed, and the sleeping dog is awakened, never to be set at rest again while he has a tooth in his head that can bite.

One of the arts of peaceful living at home is contained in the power of letting sleeping dogs lie. Papa is surly—it is a way papas have—or mamma is snappish, as even the best of mammas are at times when the girls are tiresome and will flirt with ineligible younger brothers, or when the boys, who must marry money, are paying attention to dowerless beauty instead. Well, the family horizon is overcast, and the black dog keeps the gate of the family mansion. Better let it lie there asleep, if it will but remain so. It is not pleasant to have it there certainly, but it would be worse to rouse it into activity and to have a general yelping through the house.

Sometimes, indeed, in a family given to tears and caresses and easily excited feelings, a frank challenge as to reasons why is answered by a temporary storm, followed by a scene of effusion and attendrissement, and the black dog is not awakened, but banished, by the rousing he has got. This is a method that can be tried when you have perfect knowledge and command of your material; else it is a dangerous, and nine times out of ten would be an unsuccessful, experiment. It is nearly always unsuccessful with husbands and wives, who often sulk, but rarely for causes needing explanation. Angelina knows quite well that she danced too often the other night with that fascinating young Lovelace for whom her Henry has a special, and not quite groundless, aversion. She may put on as many airs of injured innocence as she likes, and affect to consider herself an ill-used wife suffering grievous things because of her husband's displeasure and the black dog of sulks accompanying; but she knows as well as her Henry himself where her sin lies, and to kick at the black dog would only be to set him loose upon her, and be well barked at if not worried for her pains. The wiser course would be to muzzle him by ignoring his presence; and so in almost all cases of domestic dog, however black.

A sleeping dog of another kind, which it would be well if women would always leave at rest, is the potential passion of a man who is a cherished friend but an impossible lover.

Certain slow-going men are able to maintain for life a strong but strictly platonic attachment for certain women. If any warmer impulse or more powerful feeling give threatening notice of arising, it is kept in due subjection and a wholesome state of coolness, perhaps by its very hopelessness even if returned, perhaps by the fear or the knowledge that it would be ill-received, and that the only passport to the pleasant friendship so delighted in is in this calm and sober platonism. This is all very well so long as the woman minds what she is about; for the passionless attachment of a man depends mainly on her desire to keep things in their present place, and on her power of holding to the line to be observed. If she oversteps this line, if she wakens up that sleeping dog of passion, it is all over with her and platonism. What was once a pleasant truth would now be a burning satire; for friendship routed by love can never take service under its old banners again.

And yet this is what women are continually doing. They are always complaining that men are not their friends, and that they are only selfish and self-seeking in their relations with them; yet no sooner do they possess a man friend who is nothing else than they try their utmost to convert him into a lover, and are not too well pleased if they do not succeed—which might by chance sometimes happen like any other rare occurrence, but not often. And yet success ruins everything. It takes away the friend and does not give an available lover; it destroys the existing good and substitutes nothing better. If the woman be of the fishpond type, whose heart Thackeray wanted to 'drag,' she simply turns round upon the unhappy victim with one of the 'looks that kill;' if she be more weak than vain and less designing than impulsive, she regrets the momentary infatuation which has lost her her friend; but in any case she has lost him—by her own folly, not by inevitable misfortune.

Just as easy is it to rouse the sleeping dogs of hatred, of jealousy, of envy. You have a tepid well-controlled dislike to some one; and you know that he knows it. For feelings are eloquent, even when dumb, and express themselves in a thousand ways independent of words. You do not care much about your dislike—you do not nurse it nor feed it in any way, and are rather content than not to let it lie dormant, and so far harmless. But your unloved friend cannot let well alone. He will be always treading on your corns and touching you on the raw. That unlucky speculation you made; your play that was damned; the election you lost; the decision that was given against you, with costs—whenever you see him he is sure to introduce some topic that rubs you the wrong way, till at last the sleeping dog gets fairly roused, and what was merely a well-ordered dislike bursts out into a frantic and ungovernable hatred. It has been his own doing. Just as in the case of the platonic friend transformed into the passionate lover by the woman's wiles, so the dislike that gave you no trouble—become now the hatred which is a real curse to your existence—results from your friend's incessant rousing up of sleeping passions.

Young people are much given to this kind of thing. There is an impish tendency in most girls, and in all boys, that makes teazing a matter of exquisite delight to them. If they know of any sleeping dog which an elder carries about under his cloak, they are never so happy as when they are rousing it to activity, though their own backs may get bitten in the fray. Let a youngster into the secret of a weakness, a sore, and if he can resist the temptation of torturing you as the result of his knowledge he may lay claim to a virtue almost unknown in boyish morals. But he sometimes pays dearly for his fun. More than one life-long dislike, culminating in a disastrous codicil or total omission from the body of the will, has been the return-blow for a course of boyish teazings which a testy old uncle or huffish maiden aunt has had to undergo. The punishment may be severe and unjust; but the provocation was great; and revenge is a human, if indefensible, instinct common to all classes.

Fathers and mothers themselves are not always sacred ground, nor are their special dogs suffered to lie sleeping undisturbed; and perhaps the favouritism and comparative coldness patent in almost every family may be traced back to the propensity for soothing or for rousing those parental beasts. For even fathers and mothers have personal feelings in excess of their instincts, and they, no more than any one else, like to be put through their paces by the impish vivacity of youth, and made to dance according to the piping of an irreverent lad or saucy girl. If they have dogs, they do not want their children to pry into their kennels and whistle them out at their pleasure; and those who do so most will naturally get worst off in the great division of family love. 'Let sleeping dogs lie,' certainly, as a rule for private life.

Historically, the saying does not hold good. For if the great leaders of thought and reform had not roused up the sleeping dogs of their day, and made them give tongue for all after ages to hear, we should be but poorly off at this present time. Many of our liberties have been got only by diligently prodding up that very sleepy dog, the public, till he has been forced to show his teeth; and history is full of instances of how much has been done, all the world over and in every age, by the like means. Sometimes the prodded dog flies at the wrong throat on the other side, as we have had a few notable instances of late; and then it would have been wiser to leave him quietly sleeping in the shade, whether at Mentana or elsewhere; to rouse for rending being a poor amusement at the best, and an eminently unprofitable use of leather.

BEAUTY AND BRAINS.

That lovely woman fulfils only half her mission when she is unpersonable instead of beautiful, all young men, and all pretty girls secure in the consciousness of their own perfections, will agree. Indeed, it is cruel to hear the way in which ingenuous youths despise ugly girls, however clever, whose charm lies in their cleverness only, with a counteraction in their plainness. To hear them, one would think that hardness of feature was, like poverty, a crime voluntarily perpetrated, and that contempt was a righteous retribution for the offence. Yet their preference, though so cruelly expressed, is to a certain extent the right thing. When we are young, the beauty of women has a supreme attraction beyond all other possessions or qualities; and there are self-evident reasons why it should be so. It is only as we grow older that we know the value of brains, and, while still admiring beauty—as indeed who does not?—admire it as one passing by on the other side—as a grace to look at, but not to hold, unless accompanied by something more lasting.

This is in the middle term of a man's life. Old age, perhaps with the unconscious yearning of regret, goes back to the love of youth and beauty for their own sake; extremes meeting here as in almost all other circumstances. The danger is when a young man, obeying the natural impulse of his age and state, marries beauty only, with nothing more durable beneath. The mind sees what it brings, and we love the ideal we create rather than the reality that exists. A pretty face, the unworn nerves of youth, the freshness of hope that has not yet been soured by disappointment nor chilled by experience, a neat stroke at croquet and a merry laugh easily excited, make a girl a goddess to a boy who is what he himself calls in love and his friends 'spoony.' She may be narrow, selfish, spoilt, unfit to bear the burdens of life and unable to meet her trials patiently; she may be utterly unpractical and silly—one of those who never mature but only grow old—without judgment, forethought, common-sense or courage; but he sees nothing of all this. To him she is perfect; the 'jolliest girl in the world,' if he be slangy, or the 'dearest,' if he be affectionate; and he neither sees nor heeds her potential faults.

It is only when she has stepped down from her pedestal to the level of the home-threshold that he finds out she is but a woman after all, and perhaps an exceptionally weak and peevish one. Then he knows that he would have done better for himself had he married that plain brave-hearted girl who would have had him to a dead certainty if he had asked her, but whom he so unmercifully laughed at when he was making love to his fascinating charmer. As years go on and reduce the Hebe and Hecate of eighteen to much the same kind of woman at forty—with perhaps the advantage on Hecate's side if of the sort that ripens well and improves by keeping—the man feels that he has been a fool after the manner of Bunyan's Passion; that he has eaten up his present in the past,

and had all his good things at once. If he had but looked at the future and been able to wait! But in those days he wanted beauty that does not last, and cared nothing for brains which do; and so, having made his election he must abide by it, and eat bitter bread from the yeast of his own brewing.

Many a man has cursed, his whole life long, the youthful infatuation that made him marry a pretty fool. Take the case of a rising politician whose fair-faced wife is either too stupid to care about his position, or who imperils it by her folly. If amiable and affectionate, and in her own silly little way ambitious, she does him incalculable mischief by exaggeration, and by saying and doing exactly the things which are most damaging to him; if stupid, she is just so much deadweight that he has to carry with him while swimming up the stream. She is very lovely certainly, and people crowd her drawing-room to look at her; but a plain-featured, sensible, shrewd woman, with no beauty to speak of but with tact and cleverness, would have helped him in his career far better than does his brainless Venus. He finds this out when it is too late to change M. for N. in the marriage service.

The successful men of small beginnings are greatly liable to this curse of wifely hindrance. A barrister once briefless and now in silk—an artist once obscure and now famous—who in the days of impecuniosity and Bohemianism married the landlady's pretty daughter and towards the meridian of life find themselves in the front ranks of la haute volée with a wife who drops her h's and multiplies her s's, know the full bitterness of the bread baked from that hasty brewing. Each woman may have been beautiful in her youth, and each man may have loved his own very passionately; but if she have nothing to supplement her beauty—if she have no brains to fall back on, by which she can be educated up to her husband's present social position as the wife of his successful maturity—she is a mistake. Dickens was quite right to kill off pretty childish Dora in 'David Copperfield.' If she had lived she would have been like Flora in 'Bleak House,' who indeed was Dora grown old but not matured; with all the grace and beauty of her youth gone, and nothing else to take their place.

Men do not care for brains in excess in women. They like a sympathetic intellect which can follow and seize their thoughts as quickly as they are uttered; but they do not much care for any clear or specific knowledge of facts. Even the most philosophic among them would rather not be set right in a classical quotation, an astronomical calculation, or the exact bearing of a political question by a lovely being in tarlatane whom he was graciously unbending to instruct. Neither do they want anything very strong-minded. To most men, indeed, the feminine strong-mindedness that can discuss immoral problems without blushing is a quality as unwomanly as a well-developed biceps or a 'shoulder-of-mutton' fist. It is sympathy, not antagonism—it is companionship, not rivalry, still less supremacy, that they like in women; and some women with brains as well as learning—

for the two are not the same thing—understand this, and keep their blue stockings well covered by their petticoats. Others, enthusiasts for freedom of thought and intellectual rights, show theirs defiantly; and meet with their reward. Men shrink from them. Even clever men, able to meet them on their own ground, do not feel drawn to them; while all but high-class minds are humiliated by their learning and dwarfed by their moral courage. And no man likes to feel humiliated or dwarfed in the presence of a woman, and because of her superiority.

But the brains most useful to women, and most befitting their work in life, are those which show themselves in common-sense, in good judgment, and that kind of patient courage which enables them to bear small crosses and great trials alike with dignity and good temper. Mere intellectual culture, however valuable it may be in itself, does not equal the worth of this kind of moral power; for as the true domain of woman is the home, and her way of ordering her domestic life the best test of her faculties, mere intellectual culture does not help in this; and, in fact, is often a hindrance rather than a help. What good is there in one's wife being an accomplished mathematician, a sound scholar, a first-rate musician, a deeply-read theologian, if she cannot keep the accounts square, knows nothing of the management of children, lets herself be cheated by the servants and the tradespeople, has not her eyes opened to dirt and disorder, and gives way to a fretful temper on the smallest provocation?

The pretty fool who spends half her time in trying on new dresses and studying the effect of colours, and who knows nothing beyond the last new novel and the latest plate of fashions, is not a more disastrous wife than the woman of profound learning whose education has taught her nothing practical. They stand at the opposite ends of the same scale, and neither end gives the true position of women. Indeed, if one must have a fool in one's house, the pretty one would be the best, as, at the least, pleasant to look at; which is something gained.

The intellectual fool, with her head always in books and 'questions,' and her children dropping off like sheep for the want of womanly care, is something more than flesh and blood can tolerate. The pretty fool cannot help herself. If nature proved herself but a stepmother to her, and left out the best part of her wits while taking such especial care of her face, it is no fault of hers; but the intellectual fool is a case of maladministration of powers, for which she alone is responsible; and in this particular alternative between beauty and brains, without a shadow of doubt we would go in for beauty.

Ball-rooms and dinner-tables are the two places where certain women most shine. In the ball-room Hebe is the queen, and has it all her own way without fear of rivals. A very few men who care for dancing for its own sake will certainly dance with Hecate if she is light on hand, keeps accurate time, and manages her feet with scientific precision; but to

the ruck of youths, Hebe, who jerks herself into step every second round, but whose lovely face and perfect figure make up for everything, is the partner they all besiege. Only to those exceptional few who regard dancing as a serious art would she be a bore with her three jumps and a hop; while Hecate, waltzing like an angel, would be divine, in spite of her high cheek-bones and light green eyes à fleur de tête. But at a dinner-table, where a man likes to talk between the dishes, a sympathetic listener with pleasant manners, to whom he can air his stalest stories and recount his personal experiences, is preferable to the prettiest girl if a simpleton, only able to show her small white teeth in a silly smile, and say 'yes' and 'indeed' in the wrong places. The ball-room may be taken to represent youth; the dinner-table maturity. The one is the apotheosis of mere beauty, in clouds of millinery glory and a heaven of flirting; the other is solid enjoyment, with brains to talk to by the side and beauty to look at opposite, in just the disposition that makes life perfect. A well-ordered dinner-table is a social microcosm; and, being so, this is the blue riband of the arrangement.

Every woman is bound to make the best of herself. The strong-minded women who hold themselves superior to the obligations of dress and manner and all the pleasant little artificial graces belonging to an artificial civilization, and who think any sacrifice made to appearance just so much waste of power, are awful creatures, ignorant of the real meaning of their sex—social Graiæ wanting in every charm of womanhood, and to be diligently shunned by the wary.

This making the best of themselves is a very different thing from making dress and personal vanity the first considerations in life. Where women in general fail is in the exaggerations into which they fall on this and on almost every other question. They are apt to be either demireps or devotees; frights or flirts; fashionable to an extent that lands them in illimitable folly and drags their husbands' names through the mire, or they are so dowdy that they disgrace a well-ordered drawing-room, and among nicely-dressed women stand out as living sermons on slovenliness. If they are clever, they are too commonly blue-stockings, and let the whole household go by the board for the sake of their fruitless studies; and if they are domestic and good managers they sink into mere servants, never opening a book save their daily ledger, and having no thought beyond the cheesemonger's bill and the butcher's prices. They want that fine balance, that accurate self-measurement and knowledge of results, which goes by the name of common-sense and is the best manifestation of brains they can give, and the thing which men most prize. It is the most valuable working form of intellectual power, and has most endurance and vitality; and it is the form which helps a man on in life, when he has found it in his wife, quite as much as money or a good connexion.

So that, on the whole, brains are before beauty in the solid things of life. For admiration and personal love and youthful enjoyment, beauty of course is supreme; but as we

cannot be always young nor always apt for pleasure, it is as well to provide for the days when the daughters of music shall be brought low and the years draw nigh which have no pleasure in them.

The Girl of the Period and Other Social Essays, Vol. I by Eliza Lynn Linton

NYMPHS.

Between the time of the raw school-girl and that of the finished young lady is the short season of the nymph, when the physical enjoyment of life is perhaps at its keenest, and a girl is not afraid to use her limbs as nature meant her to use them, nor ashamed to take pleasure in her youth and strength. This is the time when a sharp run down a steep hill, with the chance of a tumble midway, is an exercise by no means objected to; when clambering over gates, stiles, and even crabbed stone-walls is not refused because of the undignified display of ankle which the adventure involves; when leaping a ditch comes in as one of the ordinary accidents of a marshland walk; and when the fun of riding is infinitely enhanced if the horse be only half broken or barebacked.

The nymph—an out-of-door, breezy, healthy girl, more after the pattern of the Greek Oread than the Amazon—is found only in the country; and for the most part only in the remoter districts of the country. In the town she degenerates into fastness, according to the law which makes evil merely the misdirection of force, as dirt is only matter in the wrong place. But among the mountains, in the secluded midland villages, or out on the thinly-populated moorland tracts, the nymph may be found in the full perfection of her nature. And a very beautiful kind of nature it is; though it is to be feared that certain ladies of the stricter sort would call her 'tomboy', and that those of a still narrower way of thought, unable to distinguish between unconventionality and vulgarity, would hold her to be decidedly vulgar—which she is not—and would wonder at her mother for 'letting her go on so.'

You fall upon the nymph at all hours and in all seasons. Indeed, she boasts that no weather ever keeps her indoors, and prefers a little roughness of the elements to anything too luscious or sentimental. A fresh wind, a sharp frost, a blinding fall of snow, or a pelting shower of rain are all high jinks to the nymph, to whom it is rare fun to come in like a water-dog, dripping from every hair, or shaking the snow in masses from her hat and cloak. She prefers this kind of thing to the suggestive beauty of the moonlight or the fervid heats of summer; and thinks a long walk in the crisp sharp frost, with the leaves crackling under her feet, worth all the nightingales in the wood. And yet she loves the spring and summer too, for the sake of the flowers and the birds and the beasts and the insects they bring forth; for the nymph is almost always a naturalist of the perceptive and self-taught kind, and has a marvellous faculty for finding out nests and rare habitats, and for tracking unusual trails to the hidden home.

There is no prettier sight among girls than the nymph when thoroughly at her ease, and enjoying herself in her own peculiar way. That wonderful grace of unconsciousness which belongs to savages and animals belongs to her also, and she moves with a supple freedom which affectation or shyness would equally destroy. To see her running down a green field, with the sunlight falling on her; her light dress blown into coloured clouds by the wind; her step a little too long for the correct town-walk—but so firmly planted

and yet so light, so swift, so even!—her cheeks freshly flushed by exercise; her eyes bright and fearless; her white teeth shown below her upper lip as she comes forward with a ringing laugh, carrying a young bird which she has just caught, or a sheaf of wild flowers for which she has been perilling her neck, is to see a beautiful and gracious picture which you remember with pleasure all your life after. Or you meet her quite alone on a wide bleak moor, with her hat in her hand and her hair blowing across her face, looking for plovers' eggs, or ferns and orchids down in the damp hollows. She is by no means dressed according to the canons of Le Follet, and yet she always manages to have something picturesque about her—something that would delight an artist's taste, and that is in perfect harmony with herself and her surroundings—which she wears with profound ignorance as to how well it suits her—or at most with only an instinctive knowledge that it is the right thing for her. She may be shy as she meets you; if she is passing out of the nymph state into that of conscious womanhood, she will be shy; but if still a nymph with no disturbing influences at work, she will probably look at you with a fixed, perplexing, half-provoking look of frank curiosity which you can neither notice nor take advantage of; the trammels of conventional life fettering one side heavily, if not the other.

Shocking as it is to say, the nymph may sometimes be met on the top of a haycart, and certainly in the hayfield, where she is engaged in scattering the 'cocks,' if not in raising them; and where even the haymakers themselves—and they are not a notably romantic race—do not grumble at the extra trouble she gives them, because of her evident delight in her misdeeds. Besides, she has a bright word for them as she passes; for the nymph has democratic tendencies, and is frank and 'affable' to all classes alike. She needs to be a little looked after in this direction, not for mischief but for manners; for, if not judiciously checked, she may become in time coarse. There are seamy sides to everything, and the nymph does not escape the general law.

If the nymph condescends to any game at all, it is croquet, at which she is inexorably severe. She knows nothing of the little weakness which makes her elder sisters overlook the patent spooning of the favourite curate, even though he is opposed to them—nothing of the tender favouritism which pushes on an awkward partner by deeds of helping outside the law. The nymph, who has no weakness nor tenderness of that kind, knows only the game; and the game has not elastic boundaries. Therefore she is inflexible in her justice to one side and the other. Is it not the game? she says when reproached with being disagreeable and unamiable.

But even croquet is slow to the nymph, who has been known to handle a bat not discreditably, and who is an adept at firing at a mark with real powder and ball. If she lives near a lake, a river, or the sea, she is first-rate at boating, can feather her oar and back water with the skill of a veteran oarsman, and can reef a sail or steer close without

the slightest hesitation or nervousness. She is also a famous swimmer, and takes the water like a duck; and at an ordinary summer seaside resort, if by chance she ever profanes herself by showing off there, she attracts a crowd of beach-loungers to watch her feats far outside the safe barrier of the bathing-machines. She is a great walker, wherever she lives. If a mountaineer, she is a clever cragswoman, making it a point of honour to go to the top of the most difficult and dangerous mountains in her neighbourhood, and coaxing her brothers to let her join them and their friends in expeditions which require both nerve and strength.

Her greatest sphere of social glory is a picnic, where she always heads the exploring party, clambering up the rocks of the waterfall, or diving down into the close-smelling caves, or scaling the crumbling walls of the ruin before any one else can come up to her. She is specially happy at old ruins, where she flits in and out among the broken columns and under the mouldering arches, like a spirit of the place unduly disturbed. Sometimes she climbs up by unseen means, till she reaches a point where it makes one dizzy to see her; and sometimes she startles her company by the sudden bleating of a sheep, or the wild hoot of an owl. For she can imitate the sounds of animals for the most part with wonderful accuracy; though she can also sing simple ballads without music, with sweetness and correctness. She is fond of all animals and fears none. She will pass through a field thronged with wild-looking cattle without the least hesitation; and makes friends even with the yelping farm-dogs which come snapping and snarling at her heels. In winter she feeds the wood-birds by flocks, and always takes care that the horses have a handful of corn or a carrot when she goes to see them, and that the cows are the better for her visit by a bunch of lucerne or a fat fresh cabbage-leaf. The home-beasts show their pleasure when they hear her fleet footstep on the paved yard; and her favourite pony whinnies to her in a peculiar voice as she passes his stable door. These are her friends, and their love for her is her reward.

In her early days the nymph was notorious for her dilapidated attire, perplexing mother and nurse to mend, or to understand why or how it had come about. But as her favourite hiding-place was in a forked branch midway up an old tree in the shrubbery, or a natural arbour which she had cut out for herself in the very heart of the underwood, it was scarcely to be wondered at if cloth and cotton testified to the severity of her retreats. She has still mysterious rents in her skirts, got no one knows how; and her mother still laments over her aptitude for rags, and wishes she could be brought to see the beauty of unstained apparel. She is given to early rising—to fits indeed of rising at some wild hour in the morning, for walks before breakfast and the like innocent insanities. Sometimes she takes it in hand to educate herself in certain stoicisms, and goes without butter at breakfast or without breakfast altogether, if she thinks that thereby she will grow stronger or less inclined to self-indulgence. For drink she will never touch wine nor beer; but she likes new milk, and is great in her capacity for water.

The nymph is almost always of the middle-classes. It is next to impossible indeed that she should be found in the higher ranks, where girls are not left to themselves, and where no one lives in far-away country places out of the reach of public opinion and beyond the range of public overlooking. Some years ago, before the railroads and monster hotels had made the mountain districts like Hampstead or Richmond on a Sunday afternoon, the nymph was to be found in great abundance down in Cumberland and Westmoreland. By the more remote lakes, like Buttermere and Hawes Water, and in the secluded valleys running up from the larger lakes, you would come upon square stuccoed houses, generally abominably ugly, where the nymph was mistress of the situation. She might be met riding about alone in a flapping straw hat, long before hats were fashionable headgear for women, and in a blue baize skirt for all the riding-habit thought necessary; or she might be encountered on the wild fell sides, or on the mountain heights, or in her boat sculling among the lonely lake islets, or gathering water-lilies in the bays. In the desolate stretch of moorland country to the north of Skiddaw the whole female population a few years ago was of the nymph kind; but railroads and the penny-post, cheap trains, fashion and fine-ladyism have penetrated even into the heart of the wild mountains, and now the nymph there is only a transitional development—not, as formerly, a fixed type.

The nymph is the very reverse of a flirt. She has no inclination that way, and looks shy and awkward at the men who pay her compliments or attempt anything like sentimentality. But she is not superior to boys, who are her chosen companions and favourites. A bold, brave boy, who just overtops her in skill and daring, is her delight; but anything over twenty is 'awfully old,' while forty and sixty are so remote that the lines blur and blend together and have no distinction. By-and-by the nymph becomes a staid young woman, and marries. If she goes into a close town and has children, very often her vigorous health gives way, and we see her in a few years nervous, emaciated, consumptive, and with a pitiful yearning for 'home' more pathetic than all the rest. But if she remains where she is, in the fresh pure air of her native place, she retains her youth and strength long after the age when ordinary women lose theirs, and her children are celebrated as magnificent specimens of the future generation.

We often see in country places matrons of over forty who are still like young women, both in looks and bearing, both in mental innocence and physical power. They have the shy and innocent look of girls; they blush like girls; they know less evil than almost any town-bred girl of eighteen, mothers of stalwart youths though they may be; they can walk and laugh and take pleasure in their lives like girls; and their daughters find them as much sisters as mothers. It is not quite the same thing if they do not marry; for among the saddest sights of social life is that terrible fading and withering away of comely, healthy, vigorous young country girls, who slowly pass from nymphs, full of

grace and beauty, of happiness and power, to antiquated virgins, soured, useless, debilitated and out of nature. Of these, too, there are plenty in country places; but perhaps some scheme will be some day set afoot which shall redress the overweighted balance and bring to the service of the future some of the healthiest and best of our women. Meanwhile the fresh, innocent, breezy nymph is a charming study; and may the time be far distant which shall see her tamed and civilized out of existence altogether!

The Girl of the Period and Other Social Essays, Vol. I by Eliza Lynn Linton

MÉSALLIANCES.

The French system of parents arranging the marriage of their children without the consent of the girl being even asked, but assumed as granted, is not so wholly monstrous

as many people in England believe. It seems to be founded on the idea that, given a young girl who has been kept shut up from all possibility of forming the most shadowy attachment for any man whatsoever, and present to her as her husband a sufficiently well-endowed and nice-looking man, with whom come liberty, pretty dresses, balls, admiration and social standing, and the chances are she will love him and live with him in tolerable harmony to the end of the chapter. And this idea is by no means wholly beside the truth, as we find it in practice. The parents, who are better judges of character and circumstance than the daughter can possibly be, are supposed to take care that their future son-in-law is up to their standard, whatever that may be, and that the connexion is not of a kind to bring discredit on their house; and on this and the joint income, as the solid bases, they build the not very unreasonable hypothesis that one man is as good as another for the satisfaction of a quite untouched and virginal fancy, and that suitable external conditions go further and last longer than passion. They trust to the force of instinct to make all square with the affections, while they themselves arrange for the smooth running of the social circumstances; and they are not far out in their calculations.

The young people of the two lonely lighthouse islands, who made love to each other through telescopes, are good examples of the way in which instinct simulates the impulse which calls itself love when there are two or three instead of one to look at. For we may be quite sure that had the lighthouse island youth been John instead of James, fair instead of dark, garrulous instead of reticent, short and fat instead of tall and slender, the lighthouse island girl would have loved him all the same, and would have quite believed that this man was the only man she ever could have loved, and that her instinctive gravitation was her free choice.

The French system of marriage, then, based on this accommodating instinct, works well for women who are not strongly individual, not inconstant by temperament, and not given to sentimentality. But, seeing that all women are not merely negative, and that passions and affections do sometimes assert themselves inconveniently, the system has had the effect of making society lenient to the little follies of married women, unless too strongly pronounced—partly because the human heart insists on a certain amount of free-will, which fact must be recognized—but partly, we must remember, because of the want of the young-lady element in society. In England, where our girls are let loose early, we have free-trade in flirting; consequently, we think that all that sort of thing ought to be done before marriage, and that, when once a woman has made her choice and put her neck under the yoke, she ought to stick to her bargain and loyally fulfil her self-imposed engagement.

One consequence of this free-trade in flirting and this large amount of personal liberty is that love-marriages are more frequent with us than with the French, with whom indeed,

in the higher classes, they are next to impossible; and, unfortunately, the corollary to this is that love-marriages are too often mésalliances. There is of course no question, ethically, between virtuous vulgarity and refined vice. A groom who smells of the stable and speaks broad Somersetshire or racier Cumberland, but who is brave, faithful, honest, incapable of a lie or of meanness in any form, is a better man than the best-bred gentleman whose life is as vicious as his bearing is unexceptionable. The most undeniable taste in dress, and the most correct pronunciation, would scarcely reconcile us to cruelty, falsehood, or cowardice; and yet we do not know a father who would prefer to give his girl to the groom, rather than the gentleman, and who would think horny-handed virtue, dressed in fustian and smelling of the stable, the fitter husband of the two.

If we take the same case out of our own time and circumstances, we have no doubt as to the choice to be made. It seems to us a very little matter that honest Charicles should tell his love to Aglaë in the broad Doric tongue instead of in the polished Athenian accents to which she was accustomed; that he should wear his chiton a hand's breadth too long or a span too short; that his chlamys should be flung across his brawny chest in a way which the young bloods of the time thought ungraceful; or that, as he assisted at a symposium, he should not hold the rhyton at quite the proper angle, but in a fashion at which the refined Cleon laughed as he nudged his neighbour. Yet all these conventional solecisms, of no account whatever now, would have weighed heavily against poor Charicles when he went to demand Aglaë's hand; and the balance would probably have gone down in favour of that scampish Cleon, who was an Athenian of the Athenians, perfect in all the graces of the age, but not to be compared to his rival in anything that makes a man noble or respectable. We, who read only from a distance, think that Aglaë's father made a mistake, and that the honester man would have been the better choice of the two.

It is only when we bring the same circumstances home to ourselves that we realize the immense importance of the social element; and how, in this complex life of ours, we are unable to move in a single line independent of all it touches. Imagine a fine old county family with a son-in-law who ate peas with his knife, said 'you was' and 'they is,' and came down to dinner in a shooting-jacket and a blue bird's-eye tied in a wisp about his throat! He might be the possessor of all imaginable virtues, and, if occasion required, a very hero and a preux chevalier, however rough; but occasions in which a man can be a hero or a preux chevalier are rare, whereas dinner comes every day, and the senses are never shut. The core within a conventionally ungainly envelope may be as sound as is possible to a corrupt humanity, but social life requires manners as well as principles; and though eating peas with a knife is not so bad as telling falsehoods, still we should all agree in saying, Give us truth that does not eat peas with its knife; let us have honesty in

a dress coat and pureheartedness in a clean shirt, seeing that there is no absolute necessity why these several things should be disunited.

Love-marriages, made against the will of the parents before the character is formed and while the obligations of society are still unrealized, are generally mésalliances founded on passion and fancy only. A man and woman of mature age who know what they want may make a mésalliance, but it is made with a full understanding and deliberate choice; and, if the thing turns out badly, they can blame themselves less for precipitancy than for wrong calculation. The man of fifty who marries his cook knows what he most values in women. It is not manners and it is not accomplishments; perhaps it is usefulness, perhaps good-temper; at all events it is something that the cook has and that the ladies of his acquaintance have not, and he is content to take the disadvantages of his choice with its advantages. But the boy who runs away with his mother's maid neither calculates nor sees any disadvantages. He marries a pretty girl because her beauty has touched his senses; or he is got hold of by an artful woman who has bamboozled and seduced him. It is only when his passion has worn off that he wakes to the full consequences of his mistake, and understands then how right his parents were when they cashiered his pretty Jane so soon as they became aware of what was going on, and sent that artful Sarah to the right about—just a week too late.

It is the same with girls; but in a far greater extent. If a youth's mésalliance is a millstone round his neck for life, a girl's is simply destruction. The natural instinct with all women is to marry above themselves; and we know on what physiological basis this instinct stands, and what useful racial ends it serves. And the natural instinct is as true in its social as in its physiological expression. A woman's honour is in her husband; her status, her social life, are determined by his; and even the few women who, having made a bad marriage, have nerve and character enough to set themselves free from the personal association, are never able to thoroughly regain their maiden place. There is always something about them which clogs and fetters them; always a kind of doubtful and depressing aura that surrounds and influences them. If they have not strength to free themselves, they never cease to feel the mistake they have made, until the old sad process of degeneration is accomplished, and the 'grossness of his nature' has had strength to drag her down. After a time, if her ladyhood has been of a superficial kind only, a woman who has married beneath herself may ease down into her groove and be like the man she has married; if, however, she has sufficient force to resist outside influences she will not sink, and she will never cease to suffer. She has sinned against herself, her class and her natural instincts; and has done substantially a worse thing than has the boy who married his mother's maid. Society understands this, and not unjustly if harshly punishes the one while it lets the other go scot-free; so that the woman who makes a mésalliance suffers on every side, and destroys her life almost as much as the woman who goes wrong.

All this is as evident to parents and elders as that the sun shines. They understand the imperative needs of social life, and they know how fleeting are the passions of youth and how they fade by time and use and inharmonious conditions; and they feel that their first duty to their children is to prevent a mésalliance which has nothing, and can have nothing, but passion for its basis. But novelists and poets are against the hard dull dictates of worldly wisdom, and join in the apotheosis of love at any cost—all for love and the world well lost; love in a cottage, with nightingales and honeysuckles as the chief means of paying the rent; Libussa and her ploughman; the princess and the swineherd, &c. And the fathers who stand out against the ruin of their girls by means of estimable men of inferior condition and with not enough to live on, are stony-hearted and cruel, while the daughters who take to cold poison in the back-garden, if they cannot compass a secret honeymoon or an open flight, have all the world's sympathy and none of its censure. The cruel parent is the favourite whipping-boy of poetry and fiction; and yet which is likely to be the better guide—reason or passion? experience or ignorance? calculation or impulse? maturity which can judge or youth which can only feel? There would be no hesitation in any other case than that of love; but the love-instinct is generally considered to be superior to every other consideration, and has to be obeyed as a divine voice, no matter at what cost or consequence.

The ideal of life, according to some, is founded on early marriages. But men are slower in the final setting of their character than women, and one never knows how a young fellow of twenty or so will turn out. If he is devout now, he may be an infidel at forty; if, under home influences, he is temperate and pure, when these are withdrawn he may become a rake of the fastest kind. His temper, morals, business power, ability to resist temptation, all are as yet inchoate and undefined; nothing is sure; and the girl's fancy that makes him perfect in proportion to his good looks, is a mere instinct determined by chance association.

A girl, too, has more character than she shows in her girlhood. Though she sets sooner than men, she does not set unalterably, and marriage and maternity bring out the depths of her nature as nothing else can. It is only common-sense, then, to marry her to a man whose character is already somewhat formed, rather than to one who is still fluid and floating.

It is all very well to talk of fighting the battle of life together, and welding together by time. Many a man has been ruined by these metaphors. The theory, partly true and partly pretty, is good enough in its degree; and, indeed, so far as the welding goes, we weld together in almost all things by time. We wear our shoe till we wear it into shape and it ceases to pinch us; but, in the process, we go through a vast deal of pain, and are liable to make corns which last long after the shoe itself fits easily. We do not advocate

the French system of marrying off our girls according to our own ideas of suitableness, and without consulting them; but we not the less think that, of all fatal social mistakes, mésalliances are the most fatal, and, in the case of women, to be avoided and prevented at any cost short of a broken heart or a premature death. And even death would sometimes be better than the life-long misery, the enduring shame and humiliation, of certain mésalliances.

The Girl of the Period and Other Social Essays, Vol. I by Eliza Lynn Linton

WEAK SISTERS.

The line at which a virtue becomes a vice through excess can never be exactly defined, being one of those uncertain conditions which each mind must determine for itself. But there is a line, wheresoever we may choose to set it; and it is just this fine dividing mark which women are so apt to overrun. For women, as a rule, are nothing if not extreme. Whether as saints or sinners, they carry a principle to its outside limits; and of all partizans they are the most thoroughgoing, whether it be to serve God or the devil, liberty or bigotry, Bible Communism or Calvinistic Election. Sometimes they are just as extreme in their absolute negation of force, and in the narrowness of the limits within which they would confine all human expression either by word or deed—and especially all expression of feminine life. These are the women who carry womanly gentleness into the exaggeration of self-abasement, and make themselves mere footstools for the stronger creature to kick about at his pleasure; the weak sisters who think all self-reliance unfeminine, and any originality of thought or character an offence against the ordained inferiority of their sex. They are the parasitic plants of the human family, living by and on the strength of others; growths unable to stand alone, and, when deprived of their adventitious support, falling to the ground in a ruin perhaps worse than death.

It is sad to see one of these weak sisters when given up to herself after she has lived on the strength of another. As a wife, she was probably a docile, gentle kind of Medora—at least on the outside; for we must not confound weakness with amiability—suffering many things because of imperfect servants and unprofitable tradesmen, maybe because of unruly children and encroaching friends, over none of whom she had so much moral power as enabled her to hold them in check; but on the whole drifting through her days peacefully enough, and, though always in difficulties, never quite aground. She had a tower of strength in her husband, on whom she leaned for assistance in all she undertook, whether it were to give a dose of Dalby to the child, or a scolding to the maid, or to pronounce upon the soundness of two rival sects each touting for her soul. While he lived she obeyed his counsel—not always without a futile echo of discontent in her own heart—and copied his opinions with what amount of accuracy nature had bestowed on her; though it must be confessed more often making a travesty than a facsimile, according to the trick of inferior translators, and not necessarily better pleased with his opinions than with his counsels. For your weak sister is frequently peevish, and though unable to originate is not always ready to obey cheerfully; cheerfulness indeed being for the most part an attribute of power.

Still, there stood her tower of strength, and while it stood, she, the parasite growing round it, did well enough, and flourished with a pleasant semblance of individual life into the hollowness of which it was no one's business to inquire. But when the tower fell, where was the ivy? The husband taken away, what became of the wife?—he who had been the life and she only the parasite. Abandoned to the poor resources of her own

judgment she is like one suddenly thrown into deep water, not knowing how to swim. She has no judgment. She has been so long accustomed to rely on the mind of another, that her will is paralyzed for want of use. She is any one's tool, any one's echo, and worse than that, if left to herself she is any one's victim. All she wants is to be spared the hardship of self-reliance and to be directed free of individual exertion. She is utterly helpless—helpless to act, to direct, to decide; and it depends on the mere chance of proprietorship whether her slavery shall be degradation or protection, ruin or safety. For she will be a slave, whosoever may be her proprietor; being the pabulum of which slaves and victims are naturally formed. The old age of Medora is Mrs. Borradaile, who, if her husband had lived, would have probably ended her life in an honourable captivity and a well-directed subserviency.

We often see this kind of helpless weakness in the daughter of a man of overbearing will, or of a termagant mother fond of managing and impatient of opposition. During the plastic time of her life, when education might perhaps have developed a sufficient amount of mental muscle, and a course of judicious moulding might have fairly set her up, she is snubbed and suppressed till all power is crushed out of her. She is taught the virtue of self-abnegation till she has no self to abnegate; and the backbone of her individuality is so incessantly broken that at last there is no backbone left in her to break. She has become a mere human mollusc which, when it loses its native shell, drifts helplessly at the mercy of chance currents into the maw of any stronger creature that may fancy it for his prey. One often sees these poor things left orphans and friendless at forty or fifty years of age. They have lived all their lives in leading-strings, and now are utterly unable to walk alone. They are infants in all knowledge of the world, of business, of human life; their youth is gone, and with it such beauty and attractiveness as they might have had, so that men who liked them when fresh and gentle at twenty do not care to accept their wrinkled helplessness at forty. They have been kept in and kept down, and so have made no friends of their own; and then, when the strong-willed father dies and the termagant mother goes to the place where the wicked cease from troubling, the mollusc these have hitherto protected is left defenceless and alone. If she has money, her chances of escape from the social sharks always on the look-out for fat morsels are very small indeed. It is well if she falls into no worse hands than those of legitimate priests of either section, whether enthusiastic for chasubles or crazy for missions; and if her money is put to no baser use than supplying church embroidery for some Brother Ignatius at home, or blankets for converted Africans in the tropics. It might go into Agapemones, into spiritual Athenæums, into Bond Street back-parlours, where it certainly would do no good, take it any way one would; for, as it must go into some side-channel dug by stronger hands than hers, the question is, into which of the innumerable conduits offered for the conveyance of superfluous means shall it be directed?

This is the woman who is sure to go in for religious excess of one kind or another, and for whom therefore, a convent with a sympathetic director is a godsend past words to describe. She is unfit for the life of the world outside. She has neither strength to protect herself, nor beauty to win the loving protection of men; she cannot be taken as a precious charge, but she will be made a pitiable victim; and, though matins and vespers come frightfully often, surely the narrow safety of a convent-cell is a better fate for her than the publicity of the witness-box at the Old Bailey! As she must have a master, her condition depends on what master she has; and the whole line of her future is ruled according to the fact whether she is directed or 'exploited,' and used to serve noble ends or base ones.

As a mother, the weak sister is even more unsatisfactory than as a spinster left to herself with funds which she can manipulate at pleasure. She is affectionate and devoted; but of what use are affection and devotion without guiding sense or judgment? Even in the nursery, and while the little ones need only physical care, she is more obstructive than helpful, never having so much self-reliance nor readiness of wit as to dare a remedy for one of those sudden maladies, incidental to children, which are dangerous just in proportion to the length of time they are allowed to run unchecked. And if she should by chance remember anything of therapeutic value, she has no power to make her children take what they don't like to take, nor do what they don't like to do. In the horror of an accident she is lost. If her child were to cut an artery, she would take it up into her lap tenderly enough, but she would never dream of stopping the flow; if it swallowed poison, she would send for the doctor who lives ten miles away; and if it set itself on fire, she would probably rush with it into the street, for the chance of assistance from a friendly passer-by. She never has her senses under serviceable command; and her action in a moment of danger generally consists in unavailing pity or in obstructive terror, but never in useful service nor in valuable suggestion.

But if useless in her nursery while her children are young, she is even more helpless as they get older; and the family of a weak woman grows up, unassisted by counsel or direction, just as the old Adam wills and the natural bent inclines. Her girls may be loud and fast, her sons idle and dissipated, but she is powerless to correct or to influence. If her husband does not take the reins into his own hands, or if she be a widow, the young people manage matters for themselves under the perilous guidance of youthful passions and inexperience. And nine times out of ten they give her but a rough corner for her own share. They have no respect for her, and, unless more generously compassionate than young people usually are, scarcely care to conceal the contempt they cannot help feeling. What can she expect? If she was not strong enough to root out the tares while still green and tender, can she wonder at their luxuriant growth about her feet now? She, like every one else, must learn the sad meaning of retribution, and how the weakness which

allowed evil to flourish unsubdued has to share in its consequences and to suffer for its sin.

Unsatisfactory in her home, the weak sister does not do much better in society. She is there the embodiment of restriction. She can bear nothing that has any flavour or colour in it. Topics of broad human interest are forbidden in her presence because they are vulgar, improper, unfeminine. She takes her stand on her womanhood, and makes that womanhood to be something apart from humanity in the gross. There must be no cakes and ale for others if she be virtuous; and spades are not to be called spades when she is by to hear. She is the limit beyond which no one must go, under pain of such displeasure as the weak sister can show. And, weak as she is in many things, she can compass a certain strength of displeasure; she can condemn, persistently if not passionately.

Nothing is more curious than the way in which the weak sister exercises this power of condemnation, and nothing much more wide than its scope. If incapable of yielding to certain temptations, because incapable of feeling them, she has no pity for those who have not been able to resist; yet, on the other hand, she cannot comprehend the vigour of those who withstand such influences as conquer her. If she be under the shadow of family protection, safe in the power of those who know how to hold her in all honour and prosperity, she cannot forgive the poor weak waif—no weaker than herself!—who has been caught up in the outside desert of desolation, and made to subserve evil ends. Yet, on the other hand, for the woman who is able to think and act for herself she has a kind of superstitious horror; and she shrinks from one who has made herself notorious, no matter what the mode or method, as from something tainted, something unnatural and unwomanly. She has even grave doubts respecting the lawfulness of doing good if the manner of it gets into the papers and names are mentioned as well as things; and though the fashion of the day favours feminine notoriety in all directions, she holds by the instinct of her temperament, and languidly maintains that woman is the cipher to which man alone gives distinctive value. Griselda and Medora are the types to her of womanly perfection; and the only strength she tolerates in her own sex is the strength of endurance and the power of patience. She has no doubt in her own mind that the ordained purpose of woman is to be convenient for the high-handedness and brutality of man; and any woman who objects to this theory, and demands a better place for herself, is flying in the face of Providence and forfeiting one of the distinctive privileges of her sex. For the weak sister thinks, like some others, that it is better to be destroyed by orthodox means than to be saved by heterodox ones; and that if good Christians uphold moral suttee, they are only pagans and barbarians who would put out the flames and save the victim from the burning. So far she is respectable, in that she has a distinct theory about something; but it is wonderfully eloquent of her state that it should only be the theory of Griseldadom as womanly perfection, and the beauty to be found in the moral of Cinderella sitting supinely among the ashes, and forbidden to own even the

glass-slipper that belonged to her. Fortunately for the world, the weak sister and her theories do not rule. Indeed we are in danger of going too much the other way in these times, and the revolt of our women against undue slavery goes very near to a revolt against wise submission. Still, women who are to be the mothers of men ought to have some kind of power, if the men are to be worth their place in the world; and if we want creatures with backbones we must not give our strength to rearing a race of molluscs.

The Girl of the Period and Other Social Essays, Vol. I by Eliza Lynn Linton

PINCHING SHOES.

There are two ways of dealing with pinching shoes. The one is to wear them till you get accustomed to the pressure, and so to wear them easy; the other is to kick them off and have done with them altogether. The one is founded on the accommodating principle of human nature by which it is enabled to fit itself to circumstances, the other is the high-handed masterfulness whereby the earth is subdued and obstacles are removed; the one is emblematic of Christian patience, the other of Pagan power. Both are good in certain states and neither is absolutely the best for all conditions. There are some shoes indeed, which, do what we will, we can never wear easy. We may keep them well fixed on our feet all our life, loyally accepting the pressure which fate and misfortune have imposed on us; but we go lame and hobbled in consequence, and never know what it is to make a free step, nor to walk on our way without discomfort. Examples abound; for among all the pilgrims toiling more or less painfully through life to death, there is not one whose shoes do not pinch him somewhere, how easy soever they may look and how soft soever the material of which they may be made. Even those proverbial possessors of roomy shoes, the traditional King and Princess, have their own little private bedroom slippers which pinch them, undetected by the gaping multitude who measure happiness by lengths of velvet and weight of gold embroidery; and the envied owners of the treasure which all seek and none find might better stand as instances of sorrow than of happiness—examples of how badly shod poor royalty is, and how, far more than meaner folk, it suffers from the pinching of its regal shoes.

The uncongeniality of a profession into which a man may have been forced by the injudicious overruling of his friends, or by the exigencies of family position and inherited rights, is one form of the pinching shoe by no means rare to find. And here, again, poor royalty comes in for a share of the grip on tender places, and the consequent hobbling of its feet. For many an hereditary king was meant by nature to be nothing but a plain country gentleman at the best—perhaps even less; many, like poor 'Louis Capet,' would have gone to the end quite happily and respectably if only they might have kicked off the embroidered shoes of sovereignty and betaken themselves to the highlows of the herd—if only they might have exchanged the sceptre for the turning-lathe, the pen or the fowling-piece. 'Je déteste mon métier de roi,' Victor Emmanuel is reported to have said to a republican friend who sympathized with the monarch's well-known tastes in other things beside his hatred of the kingly profession; and history repeats this frank avowal in every page. But the purple is as hard to be got rid of as Deianeira's robe; for the most part carrying the skin along with it and trailed through a pool of blood in the act of transfer—which is scarcely what royalty, oppressed with its own greatness, and willing to rid itself of sceptre and shoes that it may enjoy itself in list-slippers after a more bourgeoise fashion, would find in accordance with its wishes.

Lower down in the social scale we find the same kind of misfit between nature and position as a very frequent occurrence—pinching shoes, productive of innumerable

corns and tender places, being many where the feet represent the temperament and the shoes are the profession. How often we see a natural 'heavy' securely swathed in cassock and bands, and set up in the pulpit of the family church, simply because the tithes were large and the advowson was part of the family inheritance. But that stiff rectorial shoe of his will never wear easy. The man's secret soul goes out to the parade-ground and the mess-table. The glitter and jingle and theatrical display of a soldier's life seem to him the finest things in the whole round of professions, and the quiet uneventful life of a village pastor is of all the most abhorrent. He wants to act, not to teach. Yet there he is, penned in beyond all power of breaking loose on this side the grave; bound to drone out muddled sermons half an hour long and eminently good for sleeping draughts, instead of shouting terse and stirring words of command which set the blood on fire to hear; bound to rout the shadowy enemy of souls with weapons he can neither feel nor use, instead of prancing off at the head of his men, waving his drawn sword above his head in a whirlwind of excitement and martial glory, to rout the tangible enemies of his country's flag. He loves his wife and takes a mild parsonic pleasure in his roses; he energizes his schools and beats up recruits for his parish penny readings; he lends his pulpit to missionary delegates and takes the chair at the meeting for the conversion of Jews; he does his duty, poor man, so far as he knows how and so far as nature gave him the power; but his feet are in pinching shoes all his life long, and no amount of walking on the clerical highway can ever make them pleasant wearing. Or he may have a passionate love for the sea, and be mewed up in a lawyer's musty office where his large limbs have not half enough space for their natural activity; where he is perched for twelve hours out of the twenty-four on a high stool against a desk instead of climbing cat-like up the ropes; and where he is set to engross a longwinded deed of conveyance, or to make a fair copy of a bill of costs, instead of bearing a hand in a gale and saving his ship by pluck and quickness. He could save a ship better than he can engross a deed; while, as for law, he cannot get as much of that into his heavy brain as would enable him to advise a client on the simplest case of assault; but he knows all the differences of rig, and the whole code of signals, and can tell you to a nicety about the flags of all nations, and the name and position of every spar and stay and sheet, and when to reef and when to set sail, with any other nautical information to be had from books and a chance cruise as far as the Nore. That pen behind his ear never ceases to gall and fret; his shoe never ceases to pinch; and to the last day of his life the high stool in the lawyer's office will be a place of penance and the sailor's quarter-deck the lost heaven of his ambition.

No doubt, by the time the soldier wrongly labelled as a parson or the sailor painfully working the legal treadmill, comes to the end of his career, the old shoe which has pinched him so long will be worn comparatively easy. The gradual decay of manly vigour, and the slow but sure destruction of strong desires, reduce one's feet at last to masses of accommodating pulp; but what suffering we go through before this result can be attained!—what years of fruitless yearning, of fierce despair, of pathetic self-

suppression, of jarring discord between work and fitness, pound all the life out of us before our bones become like wax and pinching shoes are transformed to easy-fitting slippers! For itself alone, not counting the beyond to which the hope clings, it would scarcely seem that such a life were worth the living.

Another pinching shoe is to be found in climate and locality. A man hungering for the busy life of the city has to vegetate in the rural districts, where the days drop one after the other like leaden bullets, and time is only marked by an accession of dulness. Another, thirsting for the repose of the country, has to jostle daily through Cheapside. To one who thinks Canadian salmon-fishing the supreme of earthly happiness, fate gives the chance of chasing butterflies in Brazil; to another who holds 'the common objects of the seashore' of more account than silver and gold, an adverse fortune assigns a station in the middle of a plain as arid as if the world had been made without water; and a third, who cares for nothing but the free breathing of the open moors or the rugged beauty of the barren fells, is dropped down into the heart of a narrow valley where he cannot see the sun for the trees. At first this matter of locality seems to be but a very small grip on the foot, not worth a second thought; but it is one of a certain cumulative power impossible to describe, though keen enough to him who suffers; and the pinching shoe of uncongenial place is quite as hard to bear as that of uncongenial work.

Again, a man to whom intellectual companionship means more than it does to many is thrown into a neighbourhood where he cannot hope to meet with comprehension, still less with sympathy. He is a Freethinker, and the neighbourhood goes in for the strictest Methodism or the highest ultra-Ritualism; he is a Radical, and he is in the very focus of county Toryism, where the doctrine of equality and the rights of man is just so much seditious blasphemy, while the British Constitution is held as a direct emanation from divine wisdom second only to the Bible; or he is a Tory to the backbone—and his backbone is a pretty stiff one—and he is in the midst of that blatant kind of Radicalism which thinks gentlehood a remnant of the dark ages, and confounds good breeding with servility, and loyalty to the Crown with oppression of the people. Surrounded by his kind, he is as much alone as if in the middle of a desert. An Englishman among Englishmen, he has no more mental companionship than if he were in a foreign country where he and his neighbour spoke different tongues, and each had a set of signs with not two agreeing. And this kind of solitude makes a pinching shoe to many minds; though to some of the more self-centred or defying kind it is bearable enough—perhaps even giving a sense of roominess which closer communion would destroy.

Of course one of the worst of our pinching shoes is matrimony, when marriage means bondage and not union. The mismated wife or husband never leaves off, willingly or unwillingly, squeezing the tender places; and the more the pressure is objected to the worse the pain becomes. And nothing can relieve it. A country gentleman, hating the

dust and noise of London, with all his interest in his county position and all his pleasure in his place, and a wife whose love lies in Queen's balls and opera-boxes, and to whom the country is simply a slice out of Siberia wherever it may be; a hearty hospitable man, liking to see his table well filled, and a wife with a weak digestion, irritable nerves and a morbid horror of society; a pushing and ambitious man, with a loud voice and an imposing presence, and a shrinking fireside woman, who asks only to glide unnoticed through the crowd and to creep noiselessly from her home to her grave—are not all these shod with pinching shoes, which, do what they will, go on pinching to the end, and which nothing short of death or the Sir James Hannen of the time can remove? The pinching shoe of matrimony pinches both sides equally—excepting indeed, one of the two is specially phlegmatic or pachydermatous, and then the grip is harmless; but, as a rule, the ring-fence of marriage doubles all conditions, and when A. walks hobbled, B. falls lame, and both suffer from the same misfit. However, the only thing to do is to bear and wear till the upper-leather yields or till the foot takes the required shape; but there is an eternity of pain to be gone through before either of these desirable ends comes about; and the instinct which dreads pain, and questions its necessity, is by no means a false one. For all that, we must wear our pinching shoes of matrimony till death or the Divorce Court pulls them from our feet; which points to the need of being more careful than we usually are about the fit beforehand.

Poverty has a whole rack full of pinching shoes very hard to get accustomed to, and as bad to dance in lightly as were the fiery slippers of the naughty little girl in the German fairy-tale. Given a large heart, generous instincts and an empty purse, and we have the conditions of a real tragedy, both individual and social. For poverty does not mean only that elemental want of food and clothing which we generally associate with its name. Poverty may have two thousand a year as well as only a mouldy crust and three shillings a week from the parish; and poverty cursing its sore feet in a brougham is quite as common as poverty, full of corns and callosities, blaspheming behind a costermonger's barrow. The shoe may pinch horribly, though there is no question of hunger or the 'twopenny rope;' for it is all a matter of relative degree, and the means wherewith to meet wants. But as poverty is not one of those fixed conditions of human life which no human power can remove, we have not perhaps quite so much sympathy with its grips and pinches as in other things less remediable. For while there is work still undone in the world, there is gain still to be had. The man whose energies stagnate now in a dry channel can, if he will, turn them into one more fertile; and if he is making but a poor business out of meal, it is his own fault if he does not try to make a better out of malt. Where the shoe pinches hardest is in places which we cannot protect and with a grip which we cannot prevent; but we cannot say this of poverty as a necessary and inalienable condition, and sympathy is so much waste when circumstances can be changed by energy or will.


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