

THE GIRL OF THE  
PERIOD AND OTHER  
SOCIAL ESSAYS  
VOL. II  
BY  
ELIZA LYNN LINTON

## **SUPERIOR BEINGS**

Every now and then one comes across the path of a Superior Being—a being who seems to imagine itself made out of a different kind of clay from that which forms the coarser ruck of humanity, and whose presence crushes us with a sense of our own inferiority, exasperating or humiliating, according to the amount of natural pride bestowed upon us. The superior being is of either sex and of all denominations; and its superiority comes from many causes—being sometimes due to a wider grasp of intellect, sometimes to a loftier standard of morals, sometimes to better birth or a longer purse, and very often to the simple conceit of itself which simulates superiority and believes in its own apéry. The chief characteristic of the superior being is that exalted pity for inferiority which springs from the consciousness of excellence. In fact, one of the main elements of superiority consists in this sublime consciousness of private exaltation, and the immense interval that separates it from the grosser condition it surveys. Rivalry is essentially angry and contentious, but confessed superiority can afford to be serene and compassionate. The little people who live in that meagre sphere of theirs, mental and social, with which not one point of its own extended circle comes in contact, are deserving of all pity and are below anything like active displeasure. That they should be content with such a meagre sphere seems inconceivable to the superior being, as it contemplates its own enlarged horizon with the complacency proper to a dweller in vastness. Or it may be that its own world is narrow; and its superiority will then be that it is high, safe, exclusive, while its pity will flow down for those poor wayfarers who wander afield in broad latitudes, and know nothing of the pleasure found in reserved places. In any case the region in which a superior being dwells is better than the region in which any other person dwells.

Take a superior being who has made up a private account with truth, and who has, in his own mind at least, unlocked the gate of the great mysteries of life, and got to the back of that eternal Why? for ever confronting us. It does not in the least degree signify how the key is labelled. It may be High Church or Low Church, Swedenborgianism or Positivism. The name has nothing to do with the thing. It is the contented certainty of having unlocked that great gate at which others are hammering in vain which confers the superiority, and how the thing has been done does not affect the result. Neither does it disturb the equanimity of the superior being when he meets with opposing superior beings who have also made up their private accounts with truth, but in quite another handwriting and with a different sum-total at the bottom of the page; who have also unlocked the gate of the great mysteries, but with a key of contradictory wards, while the gate itself is of another order of architecture altogether. But then nothing ever does

disturb the equanimity of the superior being; for, as he is above all rivalry, so is he beyond all teaching. The meeting of two superior beings of hostile creed is like the meeting of the two blind kings in the story, each claiming the crown for his own and both ignorant of the very existence of a rival. It may be that the superior being has soared away into the cold region of spiritual negation, whence he regards the praying and praising multitudes who go to church and believe in Providence as grown people regard children who still believe in ghosts and fairies. Or it may be that he has plunged into the phosphorescent atmosphere of mysticism and an all-pervading superstition; and then all who hold by scientific law, and who think the test of common sense not absolutely valueless, are Sadducees who know nothing of the glorious liberty of the light, but who prefer to live in darkness and to make themselves the agents of the great Lord of Lies.

Sometimes the superior being goes in for the doctrine of love and impulse, as against reason or experience, holding the physiologist and political economist as creatures absolutely devoid of feeling; and sometimes his superiority is shown in the application of the hardest material laws to the most subtle and delicate manifestations of the mind. But on which side soever he ranks himself—as a spiritualist to whom reason and matter are stumbling-blocks and accursed, or as a materialist denying the existence of spiritual influences at all—he is equally secure of his own superiority and serene in his own conceit. That there should be two sides to any question never seems to strike him; and that a man of another creed should have as much right as himself to a hearing and consideration is the one hard saying impossible for him to receive. With a light and airy manner of playful contempt—sometimes with a heavy and Johnsonian scorn that keeps no terms with an opponent—the superior being meets all your arguments or batters down all your objections; sometimes, indeed, he will not condescend even so far as this, but when you express your adverse opinion just lifts up his eyebrows with a good-humoured kind of surprise at your mental state, but lets you see that he thinks you too hopeless, and himself too superior, to waste powder and shot upon you. It is of the nature of things that there should be moles and that there should be eagles; so much the worse for the moles, who must be content to remain blind, not seeing things patent to the nobler vision.

The superior being is sometimes a person who is above all the passions and weaknesses of ordinary men; a philosopher, or an etherealized woman dwelling on serene Olympian heights which no clouds obscure and where no earth-fogs rise. The passions which shake the human soul, as tempests shake the forest trees, and warp men's lives according to the run of their own lines, are unknown to these Olympian personages who cannot understand their power. They look on these tempestuous souls with a curious analytical gaze, speculating on the geography of their Gethsemane, and wondering why they cannot keep as calm and quiet as they themselves are. They sit in scornful

judgment on the mysterious impulses regulating human nature—regulating and disturbing—and think how perfect all things would be if only passions and instincts were cut out of the great plan, and men and women were left to the dominion of pure reason. But they do not take into account the law of constitutional necessity, and they are utterly unable to strike a balance between the good and evil wrought both by the tempests of souls and by those of nature. They only know that storms are inconvenient, and that for themselves they have no need of such convulsions to clear off stagnant humours; nor are they made of elements which kindle and explode at the contact of such or such materials. And if they know nothing of all this, why then should others? If they can sit on Olympian heights serene above all passion, why should not the whole world sit with them, and fogs and fires, earthquakes and deluges, be conditions unknown?

When this kind of superior being is a woman, there is something pretty in the sublime assumption of her supremacy and the sweeping range of her condemnation. Sheltered from temptation and secure from danger, she looks out on life from the serene heights of her safe place, and wonders how men can fail and women fall before the power of trials of which she knows only the name. Her circulation is languid and her temperament phlegmatic; and the burning desire of life which sends the strong into danger, perhaps into sin, is as much unknown to her as is the fever of the tropics to a Laplander crouching in his snow-hut. But she judges none the less positively because of her ignorance; and, as she looks into your quivering face with her untroubled eyes, lets you see plainly enough how she despises all the human frailties under which you may have tripped and stumbled. Sometimes she rebukes you loftily. Your soul is sore with the consciousness of your sin, your heart is weak with the pain of life; but the superior being tells you that repentance cannot undo the evil that has been done, and that to feel pain is weak.

The superiority which some women assume over men is very odd. It is like the grave rebuke of a child, not knowing what it is that it rebukes. When women take up their parable and censure men for the wild or evil things they do, not understanding how or why it has come about that they have done them, and knowing as little of the inner causes as of the outer, they are in the position of superior beings talking unmitigated rubbish. To be sure, it is very sweet and innocent rubbish, and has a lofty air about it that redeems what else would be mere presumption; but there is no more practical worth in what they say than there is in the child's rebuke when its doll will not stand upright on sawdust legs, nor eat a crumb of cake with waxen lips. This is one reason why women of the order of superior beings have so little influence over men; they judge without knowledge and condemn without insight. If they could thoroughly fathom man's nature, so as to understand his difficulties, they would then have moral power if their aims were higher than his, their principles more lofty, their practice more pure. As it is, they have next to none; and the very men who seem to yield most go only so far as

to conceal what the superior being disapproves of; they do not change because of her greater weight of doctrine.

Men show themselves as superior beings to women on another count—intellectually, rather than morally. While women rebuke men for their sins, men snub women for their follies; the one wields the spiritual, the other the intellectual, weapon of castigation, and both hold themselves superior, beyond all possibility of rivalry, according to the chance of sex. The masculine view of a subject always imposes itself on women as something unattainable by the feminine mind. Nine times out of ten it brings them to a due sense of their own inferiority, save in the case of the superior being, to whom of course the masculine view counts for nothing against her own. But even when women do not accept a man's opinions, they instinctively recognize his greater value, his greater breadth and strength. Perhaps they cry out against his hardness, if he is a political economist and they are emotional; or against his lower morality if he goes in for universal charity and philosophical latitudinarianism, and they are enthusiasts with a clearly-defined faith and a belief in its infallibility. These are wide tracts of difference between the two minds, not to be settled by the ipse dixit of even a superior being; but in general the superiority of the man makes itself more felt than the superiority of the woman. While one preaches, the other ridicules; and snubbing does more than condemnation.

## **The Girl of the Period and Other Social Essays Vol. II by Eliza Lynn Linton**

### **FEMININE AMENITIES**

A man's foes are those of his own household, and the keenest enemies of women are women themselves. No one can inflict such humiliation on a woman as can a woman when she chooses; for if the art of high-handed snubbing belongs to men, that of subtle wounding is peculiarly feminine, and is practised by the best-bred of the sex. Women are always more or less antagonistic to each other. They are gregarious in fashions and emulative in follies, but they cannot combine; they never support their weak sisters; they shrink from those who are stronger than the average; and if they would speak the truth boldly, they would confess to a radical contempt for each other's intellect—which perhaps is the real reason why the sect of the 'emancipated' commands so small a following.

Half a dozen ordinary men advocating 'emancipation' doctrines would do more towards leavening the whole bulk of womankind than any number of first-class women. Where these do stand by each other it is from instinctive or personal affection rather than from class solidarity. And this is one of the most striking distinctions of sex, and one cause, among others, why men have the upper hand, and why they are able to keep it. Certainly there are reasons, sufficiently good, why women do not more readily coalesce; and one is the immense difference between the two extremes—the silly being too silly to appreciate the wise, and the weak too weak to bear the armour of the strong. There is more difference between outsiders among women than there is among men; the feminine characteristic of exaggeration making a gap which the medium or average man fills. The ways of women with each other more than all else show the great difference between their morale and that of men. They flatter and coax as men could not do, but they are also more rude to each other than any man would be to his fellow. It is amazing to see the things they can do and will bear—things which no man would dream of standing and which no man would dare to attempt. This is because they are not taught to respect each other, and because they have no fear of consequences. If one woman is insulted by another, she cannot demand satisfaction nor knock the offender down; and it is unladylike to swear and call names. She must bear what she can repay only in kind; but, to do her justice, she repays in a manner undeniably effective and to the point.

There is nothing very pronounced about the feminine modes of aggression and retaliation; and yet each is eloquent and sufficient for its purpose. It may be only a stare, a shrug, a toss of the head; but women can throw an intensity of disdain into the simplest gesture which answers the end perfectly. The unabashed serenity and unflinching constancy with which one woman can stare down another is in itself an art

that requires a certain amount of natural genius, as well as careful cultivation. She puts up her eyeglass—not being shortsighted—and surveys the enemy standing two feet from her, with a sublime contempt for her whole condition, or with a still more sublime ignoring of her sentient existence, that no words could give. If the enemy be sensitive and unused to the kind of thing, she is absolutely crushed, destroyed for the time, and reduced to the most pitiable state of self-abasement. If she be of a tougher fibre, and has had some experience of feminine warfare, she returns the stare with a corresponding amount of contempt or of obliviousness; and from that moment a contest is begun which never ceases and which continually gains in bitterness. The stare is the weapon of offence most in use among women, and is specially favoured by the experienced against the younger and less seasoned. It is one of the instinctive arms native to the sex; and we have only to watch the introduction of two girls to each other to see this, and to learn how even in youth is begun the exercise which time and use raise to such deadly perfection.

In the conversations of women with each other we again meet with examples of their peculiar amenities to their own sex. They never refrain from showing how much they are bored; they contradict flatly, without the flimsiest veil of apology to hide their rudeness; and they interrupt ruthlessly, whatever the subject in hand may be. One lady was giving another a minute account of how the bride looked yesterday when she was married to Mr. A., of somewhat formidable boudoir repute, with whom her listener had had sundry tender passages which made the mention of his marriage a notoriously sore subject. 'Ah! I see you have taken that old silk which Madame Josephine wanted to palm off on me last year,' said the tortured listener brusquely breaking into the narrative without a lead of any kind. And the speaker was silenced. In this case it was the interchange of doubtful courtesies, wherein neither deserved pity; but to make a disparaging remark about a gown, in revenge for turning the knife in a wound, was a thoroughly feminine manner of retaliation, and one that would not have touched a man. Such shafts fall blunted against the rugged skin of the coarser creature; and the date or pattern of a bit of cloth would not have told much against the loss of a lover. But as most women passionately care for dress, their toilet is one of their most vulnerable parts. Ashamed to be unfashionable, they tolerate anything in each other rather than shabbiness or eccentricity, even when picturesque; hence a sarcastic allusion to the age of a few yards of silk as a set-off against a grossly cruel stab was a return wound of considerable depth cleverly given.

The introduction of the womankind belonging to a favourite male acquaintance of somewhat lower social condition affords a splendid opportunity for the display of feminine amenity. The presentation cannot be refused, yet it is resented as an intrusion. 'Another daughter, Mr. C.! You must have a dozen daughters surely,' a peeress said

disdainfully to a commoner whom personally she liked, but whose family she did not want to know. The poor man had but two; and this was the introduction of the second.

Very painful to a high-spirited gentlewoman must be the way in which a superior creature of this kind receives her, if not of the same set as herself. The husband of the inferior creature may be adored, as men are adored by fashionable women who love only themselves, and care only for their own pleasures. Artist, man of letters, beau sabreur, he is the passing idol, the temporary toy, of a certain circle; and his wife has to be tolerated for his sake, and because she is a lady and fit to be presented, though an outsider. So they patronize her till the poor woman's blood is on fire; or they snub her till she has no moral consistency left in her, and is reduced to a mere mass of pulp. They keep her in another room while they talk to her husband with their other intimates; or they admit her into their circle, where she is made to feel like a Gentile among the faithful, for either they leave her unnoticed altogether or else speak to her on subjects quite apart from the general conversation, as if she were incapable of understanding them on their own ground. They ask her to dinner without her husband, and take care that there is no one to meet her whom she would like to see; but they ask him when they are at their grandest, and express their deep regret that his wife (uninvited) cannot accompany him. They know every turn and twist that can humiliate her if she has pretensions which they choose to demolish. They praise her toilet for its good taste in simplicity, when she thinks she is one of the finest on an occasion on which no one can be too fine. They tell her that pattern of hers is perfect, and made just like the dear duchess's famous dress last season, when she believes that she has Madame Josephine's last, freshly imported from Paris. They celebrate her dinner as the very perfection of a refined family dinner without parade or cost, though it has all been had from the crack confectioner's, and though the bill for the entertainment will cause many a day of family pinching. These are the things which women say to one another when they wish to pain and humiliate; things which pain and humiliate some more than would a positive disgrace. For some women are distressingly sensitive about these little matters. Their lives are made up of trifles, and a failure in a trifle is a failure in their object of life.

Women can do each other no end of despite in a small way in society, not to speak of mischief of a graver kind. A hostess who has a grudge against one of her more famous lady-guests can always ensure her a disappointing evening under cover of doing her supreme honour and paying her extra attention. If she sees the enemy engaged in a pleasant conversation with one of the male stars, down she swoops, and in the sweetest manner possible carries her off to another part of the room, to introduce her to some school-girl who can only say yes or no in the wrong places—'who is dying for the honour of talking to you, my dear;' or to some unfledged stripling who blushes and grows hot and cannot stammer out two consecutive sentences, but who is presented as a rising genius and to be treated with the consideration due to his future. As her persecution is



done under the guise of extra friendliness, the poor victim cannot cry out, nor yet resist; but she knows that whenever she goes to Mrs. So and So's she will be seated next the stupidest man at table, and prevented from talking to any one she likes in the evening; and that every visit to that lady is made in some occult manner unpleasant to her. And yet what has she to complain of? She cannot complain in that her hostess trusts to her for help in the success of her entertainment, and moves her about the room as a perambulating attraction which she has to dispense fairly among her guests, lest some should be jealous of the others. She may know that the meaning is to annoy; but who can act on meaning as against manner? How crooked soever the first may be, if the last is straight the case falls to the ground, and there is no room for remonstrance.

Often women flirt as much to annoy other women as to attract men or amuse themselves. If a wife has crossed swords with a friend, and the husband is in any way endurable, let her look out for retaliation. The woman she has offended will take her revenge by flirting more or less openly with the husband, all the while loading the enemy with flattery if she be afraid of her, or snubbing her without much disguise if she feel herself the stronger. The wife cannot help herself, unless things go too far for public patience. A jealous woman without proof is the butt of her society, and brings the whole world of women like a nest of wasps about her ears. If wise, she will ignore what she cannot laugh at; if sensitive, she will fret; if vindictive, she will repay. Nine times out of ten she does the last, and, may be, with interest; and so goes on the duel, though all the time the fighters appear to be intimate friends and on the best possible terms together.

But the range of these feminine amenities is not confined to women; it includes men as well; and women continually take advantage of their position to insult the stronger sex by saying to them things which can be neither answered nor resented. A woman can with the quietest face and the gentlest voice imaginable insinuate that you have just cheated at cards; she can give you the lie direct as coolly as if she were correcting a misprint; and you cannot defend yourself. To brawl with her would be unpardonable; to contradict her is useless; and the sense of society does not allow you to show her any active displeasure. In this instance the weaker creature is the stronger, and the more defenceless is the safer. You have only the rather questionable consolation of knowing that you are not singular in your discomfiture, and that when she has made an end of you she will probably have a turn with your betters, and make them too, dance to her piping, whether they like the tune or not. At all events, if she humiliates you she humiliates her sisters still more; and with the knowledge that, hardly handled as you have been, others are yet more severely dealt with, you must learn to be content, and to practise as much of that grim kind of patience, which suffers keenly and bears silently, as your nature will permit.

**GRIM FEMALES.**

Almost all histories and mythologies embody the idea of a race of grim females. Whether as fabulous and complex monsters, like the Sphinx and the Harpies, or in the more human forms of the Fates and the Furies, unsexed women have been universally recognized as forming part of the system of nature and to be accepted among the stranger manifestations of human life. Yet it is hard to understand why they should exist at all. As moral 'sports,' they are so far interesting to the psychologists; but, as women with definite duties and fixed functions, nothing can be less admirable. They are even worse than effeminate men—which is saying everything.

The grim female must be carefully distinguished from the masculine woman; for they are by no means essentially the same, though the types may run into each other, and sometimes do. But the masculine woman, if not grim but only Amazonian, has often much that is fine and beautiful in her, as we see in her great prototype Pallas Athene; but the grim female pur sang is never noble, never beautiful; and the only meaning of her existence—the only mission she seems sent into the world to fulfil—is that of serving as a warning to the young what to avoid.

The grim female is not necessarily an old maid, as would appear likely at first sight. We find her of all conditions indifferently—as maid, wife, widow, as mother and childless alike—and we do not find that her condition in any way affects her character. If born grim, she remains grim to the end; and neither marriage nor motherhood modifies her. The grim female of novelists is generally an old maid; but she is a caricature, painted in the broadest lines and copied from the outsides of things. She is emphatically an odd woman; odd in her dress, her mode, her state. She wears a flapping cap, skimpy skirts and rusty brown mittens on her bony hands. She has a passionate aversion against men and matrimony; and she lives queerly behind a barricaded house-door, with a small slavey, or an elderly female afflicted with deafness, to do her work and bear the brunt of her temper. But she is always odd, unmarried, unfashionable and unlike everybody else, and could never be mistaken for an ordinary woman from the first phrase which stamps her personality on the page to the last paragraph of her fictitious existence.

Now the grim female of real life may be one of the most conventional of her sex, and in fact, she generally is one of the most conventional of her sex. She is one who rules her household with a rod of iron carefully wrought after the pattern of her neighbours' rods, and to whom a dish set awry, or the second-best china instead of the best, counts for as great a moral delinquency in her servants as a breach of all the Ten Commandments

together. She is a woman who regards being out of the fashion, or being foremost in the fashion, as equally reprehensible, and to whom dress is among the most important matters of life. Wherefore she is notorious for a certain grim grandeur of style, as one who respects herself by her clothes, and is known among other women as possessing handsome lace and costly velvet in profusion. Are not lace and velvet de rigueur for women of condition? and what is the grim female but the embodiment of the 'rigour of the game' in all matters? Therefore she clothes herself sumptuously, without elegance or taste; and would as soon be seen abroad in her dressing-gown and slippers as without her characteristic heavy velvet or rustling silk. But the artist's little wife, in her fresh muslin and nice admixture of colours, sails round her for grace and beauty at about one-twentieth part of what the grim female's stately ugliness has cost.

One characteristic of the grim female is her want of womanly passion for children. She may have so much maternal instinct, perverted, as to be on friendly terms with a dog or two, a cat, or may be a cockatoo; but she has no real affection for children, no comprehension of child-nature, and the 'sublime nonsense' of the nursery is a thing unknown to her from first to last. If she have children of her own, she treats them in a hard wooden way that has nothing of the ideal mother about it. She generally sees that they are properly cared for, because she is a disciplinarian; but, though she is inexorable on the score of cold baths and 'no trash,' she never condescends to the weakness of love. If her little ones are sick, they are set aside and dosed until they are well; if they are naughty, they are punished; but they never know those moments of tender indulgence which help them over a period of indisposition not severe enough for actual doctoring, yet throwing them out of gear and inducing a spell of what ignorance calls naughtiness. Rhadamanthus was a weakling compared to the grim female in the nursery; and what she is in her nursery she continues to be in the schoolroom, and the drawing-room to follow. Her children are always causes of annoyance to the grim female, and the first stirrings of individuality, the first half-unconscious trials of their young strength, are offences she cannot away with. Children and inferiors are they in her eyes, even when grown up and married; and she exacts from them the humility and deference of their lower condition. Hence she is one to whom the present generation is undeniably worse than the past; one who groans over the follies and shortcomings of the times and who thinks that good conduct died out with her own youth, and that it is not likely, by the look of things, to be restored. In fact, youth itself is the root and basis of offence; and if she coerces children, she tyrannizes over girls and snubs young men, with inexorable impartiality.

The grim female is not necessarily a strong-minded woman, nor a learned woman, like those who wear spectacles, go to scientific meetings and are great in the classics and the 'ologies. She may be of the emancipated class; it all depends on chance; and a grim female, when of the emancipated, is a very formidable person indeed. But she is not

necessarily one of these. On the contrary, part of her very grimness comes from her intense conservatism and uncompromising conventionality. Nothing is so abhorrent to her as innovation or novelty in any shape. She does not hold with any one out of the narrowest groove of respectable belief, in what direction soever the diverging line may go. A Romanist or a Baptist, a Jew or an infidel, it is all one to her; each is equally dreadful to her, and each is eternally foredoomed. She is of the orthodox Church without fal-lals; as far removed from Ritualism as she is from ranting, and demanding for herself that infallibility of judgment and absolute possession of the truth which she denies to the Pope and all his Cardinals. Beware how you broach new doctrines in her presence. She has been known before now to abjure her nearest relations for no greater moral lapse than a weak belief in globules; while, as for anything like graver aberrations, say on the ape theory or on the plurality of races, on development in religions or on a republican form of government, she has no toleration whatever. If the Smithfield fires existed at the present day, the grim female would be the first to light the faggots. It is all the same if she belongs to any Dissenting persuasion; part of her grimness coming from her intolerance, and her own beliefs being simply the springboard on which she stands.

Many causes produce the grim female. It may be that she is grim from social pride as well as from natural hardness. If she has been used to live with people whom, rightly or wrongly, she considers her inferiors, she will probably queen it over them in a very unmistakable manner. The prelatric blood is renowned for this sort of thing; and a bishop's daughter, or an archbishop's grand-daughter, or Mrs. Proudie, prelatric by marriage only, if of the grim class, is one of the grimmest of her class. The halo of sanctity round the mitre and the crozier will be greater in her eyes than even the glitter of the strawberry leaves; and she holds herself consecrated by her birth or marriage to the understanding of every moral question, and specially to the final settlement of every tough theological position. Or she may be grim because of her isolation and meagre intercourse with the world at large; such as she is found in the remoter districts. This kind comes into the exceptional or novelist's class, and is often more masculine than grim. These are the women who hunt and fish and shoot like men, and who may be found in all weathers wandering alone about the mountains in short petticoats and spatterdashes—women who affect to be essentially mannish in person, habits and attire, and who may be quite jolly easy-going fellows in their own way, or else grim and trenchant, as nature or the fit takes them. This is a kind not at all uncommon in country places among the higher class of resident ladies—ladies who are so highly placed locally that they can afford to disregard public opinion, and who are so independent by disposition that they naturally go off to the manly side, and make themselves bad imitations, as the best they can do.

The grim female tries her strength with all newcomers. She is like one of the giants or black knights of old romance, who lived in castles or caves, whence they pounced on all

passers-by, and either wrung their necks if they conquered or retreated howling if discomfited. This is what the grim female does in her degree. She dashes on all who are presented to her, and has a passage of arms as the first act of the new drama. If her opponents yield out of timidity or good-breeding, or perhaps from not understanding the warlike nature of the encounter, she puts her foot on them forthwith, and ignominiously crushes them; if they defy her, and give her back blow for blow, ten to one she cuts them and becomes their enemy for ever after. For she has not breadth enough to be magnanimous, and the one thing she never forgives is successful opposition. Very grim is she in the presence of human weakness, moral and physical. Woe to that unhappy maid of hers who has slipped on the narrow path of prudence! She will be turned out to perish with no more compunction than if she were a black-beetle to be swept out of the way.

As a nurse the grim female is precise, punctual, obedient to orders, but inexorable. She would give the patient a fit of nervous hysterics which would throw him back for a week, rather than allow him five minutes' grace in the matter of a painful operation or a nauseous draught. Without variableness or weakness herself, she cannot endure it in others, and whosoever comes under her hand must be content to remain in shape, and to keep himself well braced up to the utmost rigidity of duty. If she had to lose an arm or a leg, she would go to her trouble like a Trojan; and why not others? She would merely tighten her lips and hold her breath, and then would sit down to let herself be hacked and mangled without a groan or a word. To judge by the notice given of her in her sister's life, Emily Brontë was of the grim class, and about the grimmest for her age and state that could well be found. Had she lived, and lived unsoftened, she would have been one unbroken mass of iron and granite, without a soft spot anywhere. Her very love was fiercer than other women's hate; her strength was more terrible than a man's anger; her passions were as fiery as furnace flames. Of all the examples we could cite, she seems about the fittest for our model.

A grim female has no mercy. She may be just, but if so, it is in a hard uncompromizing way that makes her justice worse than others' partiality. For justice can be sympathetic, even if unwavering; and the grim female is never sympathetic, how painful soever the work on hand and the sentence to be executed. Neither is she gay; for she is not plastic enough to be either one or the other. She is run into an iron mould, where her nature is compressed as in a vice; and she allows of no expansion, no lipping over, no bursting of bonds anyhow.

What would become of us if all our women were like her? Without any of the feminine little weaknesses at which we have our laugh yet which we do not wholly dislike—without any of the pretty coaxing ways which we know warp our better judgment and take us out of the strict course; and yet how pleasant that warping process is!—without

any even of the transient petulances which give so much light and shade to a woman's character, the grim female stands like an old-world Gorgon, turning living flesh and blood to stone. When we look at her we are inclined to forgive all the smallness and silliness which sometimes vex us in the ordinary woman, and to think that there are worse things than the love of dress for which we so often reproach our wives and daughters; that flirting, which is reprehensible no doubt, might be exchanged for something even more reprehensible; and that vanity, of the giggling, coquettish kind, though to be steadily discouraged and sternly reproofed, is not quite the worst feminine thing after all. Surely not! A grim female who cannot flirt nor giggle nor cry, nor yet kiss and make up again when scolded, is far away a worse kind of thing than a feather-headed little puss who is always doing wrong by reason of her foolish brain, but who manages somehow to pull herself right because of her loving heart. Weak women, vain women, affected women, and the whole class of silly women, whatever the speciality of silliness exhibited, are tiresome enough, heaven knows; but, unsatisfactory as they are, they are better than the grim female—that woman of no sex, born without softness or sympathy and living without pity and without love.

**MATURE SIRENS.**

Nothing is more incomprehensible to girls than the love and admiration sometimes given to middle-aged women. They cannot understand it; and nothing but experience will ever make them understand it. In their eyes, a woman is out of the pale of personal affection altogether when she has once lost that shining gloss of youth, that exquisite freshness of skin and suppleness of limb, which to them, in the insolent plenitude of their unfaded beauty, constitute the chief claims to admiration of the one sex from the other. And yet they cannot conceal from themselves that the pretty maid of eighteen is often deserted for the handsome woman of forty, and that the patent witchery of their own youth and brilliant colouring goes for nothing against the mysterious charms of a mature siren. What can they say to such an anomaly? There is no good in going about the world disdainfully wondering how on earth a man could ever have taken up with such an antiquated creature!—suggestively asking their male friends what could he see in a woman of her age, old enough to be his mother? There the fact stands; and facts are stubborn things. The eligible suitor who has been coveted by more than one golden-haired girl has married a woman twenty years her senior, and the middle-aged siren has quietly carried off the prize which nymphs in their teens have frantically desired to win. What is the secret? How is it done? The world, even of silly girls, has got past any belief in spells and talismans, such as Charlemagne's mistress wore, and yet the man's fascination seems to them quite as miraculous and almost as unholy as if it had been brought about by the black art. But if they had any analytical power they would understand the diablerie of the mature siren clearly enough; for it is not so difficult to understand when one puts one's mind to it.

In the first place, a woman of ripe age has a knowledge of the world, and a certain suavity of manner and moral flexibility, wholly wanting to the young. Young girls are for the most part all angles—harsh in their judgments, stiff in their prejudices, narrow in their sympathies. They are full of combativeness and self-assertion if they belong to one type of young people, or they are stupid and shy if they belong to another type. They are talkative with nothing to say, and positive with nothing known; or they are monosyllabic dummies who stammer out Yes or No at random, and whose brains become hopelessly confused at the first sentence with which the stranger, to whom they have just been introduced, attempts to open a conversation. They are generally without pity; their want of experience making them hard towards sorrows which they do not understand—let us charitably hope also making them ignorant of the pain they inflict. That famous article in the Times on the cruelty of young girls, à propos of Constance Kent's confession, though absurdly exaggerated, had in it the core of truth which gives the sting

to such papers, which makes them stick, and which is the real cause of the outcry they create.

Girls are cruel; there is no question about it. If passive rather than active, they are simply indifferent to the sufferings of others; if of a more active temperament, they find a positive pleasure in giving pain. A girl will say horribly cruel things to her dearest friend, then laugh at her because she cries. Even her own mother she will hurt and humiliate if she can; while, as for any unfortunate aspirant not approved of, were he as tough-skinned as a rhinoceros she would find means to make him wince. But all this acerbity is toned down in the mature woman. Experience has enlarged her sympathies, and knowledge of suffering has softened her heart to the sufferings of others. Her lessons of life too, have taught her tact; and tact is one of the most valuable lessons that a man or woman can learn. She sees at a glance the weak points and sore places in her companion, and she avoids them; or if she passes over them, it is with a hand so soft and tender, a touch so soothing, that she calms instead of irritating. A girl would have come down on those weak places heavily, and would have torn off the bandages from the sore ones, jesting at scars because she herself had never felt a wound, and deriding the sybaritism of diachylon because ignorant of the anguish it conceals.

Furthermore, the mature siren is thoughtful for others. Girls are self-asserting and aggressive. Life is so strong in them, and the instinct which prompts them to try their strength with all comers and to get the best of everything everywhere, is so irrepressible, that they are often disagreeable because of that instinctive selfishness, that craving, natural to the young, of taking all and giving back nothing. But the mature siren knows better than this. She knows that social success entirely depends on what each of us can throw into the common fund of society; that the surest way to win consideration for ourselves is to be considerate for others; that sympathy begets liking, and self-suppression leads to exaltation; and that if we want to gain love we must first show how well we can give it. Her tact then, and her sympathy, her moral flexibility and quick comprehension of character, her readiness to give herself to others, are some of the reasons, among others, why the society of a cultivated agreeable woman of a certain age is sought by those men to whom women are more than mere mistresses or toys. Besides, she is a good conversationalist. She has no pretensions to any special or deep learning—for, if pedantic, she is spoilt as a siren at any age—but she knows a little about most things; at all events, she knows enough to make her a pleasant companion in a tête-à-tête or at a dinner-table, and to enable her to keep up the ball when thrown. And men like to talk to intelligent women. They do not like to be taught nor corrected by them, but they like that quick sympathetic intellect which follows them readily, and that amount of knowledge which makes a comfortable cushion for their own. And a mature siren who knows what she is about would never do more than this, even if she could.



Though the mature siren rests her claims to admiration on more than mere personal charms, and appeals to something beyond the senses, yet she is personable and well preserved, and, in a favourable light, looks nearly as young as ever. So the men say who knew her when she was twenty; who loved her then, and have gone on loving her, with a difference, despite the twenty years which lie between this and then. Girls, indeed, despise her charms because she is no longer young; and yet she may be even more beautiful than youth. She knows all the little niceties of dress, and, without going into the vulgar trickery of paint and dyes—which would make her hideous—is up to the best arts of the toilet by which every point is made to tell and every minor beauty is given its fullest value. For part of the art and mystery of sirenhood is an accurate perception of times and conditions, and a careful avoidance of that suicidal mistake of which *la femme passée* is so often guilty—namely, setting herself in confessed rivalry with the young by trying to look like them, and so losing the good of what she has retained, and betraying the ravages of time by the contrast.

The mature siren is wiser than this. She knows exactly what she has and what she can do; and before all things avoids whatever seems too youthful for her years; and this is one reason why she is always beautiful, because always in harmony. Besides, she has very many good points, many positive charms still left. Her figure is still good—not slim and slender certainly, but round and soft, and with that slower, riper, lazier grace which, quite different from the antelope-like elasticity of youth, is in its own way as lovely. If her hair has lost its maiden luxuriance she makes up with crafty arrangements of lace, which are more picturesque than the fashionable wisp of hay-like ends tumbling half-way to the waist. She has still her white and shapely hands with their pink filbert-like nails; still her pleasant smile and square small teeth—those one or two new, matching so perfectly with the old as to be undiscoverable! Her eyes are bright yet, and if the upper muscles are a little shrunk, the consequent apparent enlargement of the orbit only makes them more expressive; her lips are not yet withered; her skin is not wrinkled. Undeniably, when well-dressed and in a favourable light, the mature siren is as beautiful in her own way as the girlish belle; and the world knows it and acknowledges it.

That mature sirens can be passionately loved, even when very mature, history gives us more than one example; and the first name that naturally occurs to one's mind is that of the too famous Ninon de l'Enclos. And Ninon, if a trifle mythical, was yet a fact and an example. But not going quite to Ninon's age, we often see women of forty and upwards who are personally charming, and whom men love with as much warmth and tenderness as if they were in the heyday of life—women who count their admirers by dozens, and who end by making a superb marriage, and having quite an Indian summer of romance and happiness. The young laugh at this idea of the Indian summer for a bride of forty-five; but it is true; for neither romance nor happiness, neither love nor mental youth, is a

matter of years; and after all we are only as old as we feel, and certainly no older than we look.

All women do not harden by time, nor wither, nor yet corrupt. Some merely ripen and mellow and get enriched by the passage of the years, retaining the most delicate womanliness—we had almost said girlishness into quite old age, blushing as swiftly under their grey hairs, while shrinking from anything coarse or vulgar or impure as sensitively, as when they were girls. *La femme à quarante ans* is the French term for the opening of the great gulf beyond which love cannot pass; but human history disproves this date, and shows that the heart can remain fresh and the person lovely long after the age fixed for the final adieu to admiration—that the mature siren can be adored by her own contemporaries when the rising generation regard her as nothing better than a chimney-corner fixture. Mr. Trollope recognized the claims of the mature siren in his *Orley Farm* and *Miss Mackenzie*; and no one can deny the intense naturalness of the characters and the interest of the stories.

Another point which tells with the mature woman is, that she is not jealous nor exacting. She knows the world, and takes what comes with that philosophy which springs from knowledge. If she be of an enjoying nature—and she cannot be a siren else—she accepts such good as floats to the top, neither looking too deep into the cup nor speculating on the time when she shall have drained it to the dregs. Men feel safe with her. If they have entered on a tender friendship with her, they know that there will be no scene, no tears, no upbraidings, when an inexorable fate comes in to end their pleasant little drama, with the inevitable wife as the scene-shifter. The mature siren knows so well that fate and the wife must break in between her and her friend, that she is resigned from the first to what is foredoomed, and thus accepts her bitter portion, when it comes, with dignity and in silence. Where younger women would fall into hysterics and make a scene, perhaps go about the world taking their revenge in slander, the middle-aged woman holds out a friendly hand and takes the back seat gallantly, never showing by word nor look that she has felt her deposition. She becomes the best friend of the new household; and if any one is jealous, ten to one it is the husband who is jealous of her love for his wife. Of course it may be the wife herself, who cannot see what her husband can find to admire so much in Mrs. A, and who pouts at his extraordinary predilection for her, though of course she would scorn to be jealous—as, indeed, she has no cause. For even a mature siren, however delightful she may be, is not likely to come before a young wife in the heart of a young husband. Though the French paint the love of a woman of forty as pathetic, because slightly ridiculous and certainly hopeless, yet they arrange their theory of social life so that a youth is generally supposed to make his first love of a married woman many years his elder, while a mature siren finds her last love in a youth.

We have not come to this yet in England, either in theory or practice; and it is to be hoped that we never shall come to it. Mature sirens are all very well for men of their own age, and it is pleasant to see them still loved and admired, and to recognize in them the claims of women to something higher than mere personal passion; but the case would be very different if they became ghoulish seducers of the young, and kept up the habit of love by entangling boyish hearts and blighting youthful lives. As they are now, they form a charming element in society, and are of infinite use to the world. They are the ripe fruit in the garden where else everything would be green and immature—the last days of the golden summer set against the disappointing backwardness of spring and before the chills of autumn have come. They contain in themselves the advantages of two distinct epochs, and while possessing as much personal charm as youth, possess also the gains which come by experience and maturity. They keep things together as the young could not do; and no gathering of friends is perfect which has not one or two mature sirens to give the tone, and prevent excesses. They soften the asperities of high-handed boys and girls, which else would be too biting; and they set people at ease, and make them in good humour with themselves, by the courtesy with which they listen to them and the patience with which they bear with them. Even the very girls who hate them fiercely as rivals love them passing well as half maternal, half sisterly, companions; and the first person to whom they would carry their sorrows would be a mature siren, quite capable for her own part of having caused them.

It would be hard indeed if the loss of youth did not bring with it some compensations; but the mature siren suffers less from that loss than any other kind of woman. Indeed, she seems to have a private elixir of her own which is not quite drained dry when she dies, beloved and regretted, at threescore years and ten; leaving behind her one or two old friends who were once her ardent lovers, and who still cherish her memory as that of the finest and most fascinating woman they ever knew—something which the present generation is utterly incapable of repeating.

**PUMPKINS.**

Pumpkins are among the most imposing of all groundling growths. They have fine showy flowers, handsome leaves, roving stems, and they bear solid-looking fruit of a goodly size and gorgeous colour. To see them spreading over their domain with such rapid luxuriance, one would imagine them among the best things growing; but a critical examination proves their flesh to be about three parts water, while as for their stalks, they are of so pithless a nature that they can only creep along the earth, unable to stand upright without support;—which tells something against the pumpkin's claim for extra consideration. Still, their showy largeness attracts the eye, and not a few of us believe in pumpkins, and admire both their mode of growth and the fruit resulting. In like manner the human pumpkins—those beings of imposing presence and loud self-assertion—get themselves believed in by the simple; and, as occasions by which their watery and fibreless nature is revealed do not arise every day, they are for the most part accepted for the substantialities they assume to be, and the world is deceived by appearances as it ever has been.

These human pumpkins abound everywhere. In all states and professions, and in both sexes, we find them flourishing magnificently on the face of the earth, taking the lead in their society and setting themselves out as the finest fellows to be found in their respective gardens. Among them are the men of the Bombastes type, so dear to the older playwrights; braggadocios of the kill 'em and eat 'em school, who were such terrible fellows to look at and listen to, though only pumpkins of a singularly innocuous nature when stoutly squeezed and analyzed; fire-eaters of the juggling kind, with special care taken that the fire shall be harmless and that the danger shall lie only in the fear of the spectators. Now that duelling has gone out of fashion, and discharged captains who have signalized themselves in war are rare, our old swashbuckler type of pumpkins has gone out both in fact and fiction, on the stage and off it. To be sure we have a few travellers of slightly apocryphal courage, and more than doubtful accuracy, whose books of perilous adventure and breathless dangers are to us what Bombastes and Bobadil were to our fathers; and we have Major Wellington de Boots with his military swagger and his hare's heart. But he is a very weak imitation of the old fire-eater; and, on the whole, this special family of the pumpkins has dwindled into insignificance, and their place knows them no more.

Then there is the pumpkin after the cut of the Prince Regent—the man of deportment, big, handsome, showy, and specially noticeable for a loud voice, a broad chest, and an indescribable air of superiority and command; the man who has studied bowing as one

of the fine arts, who walks with a swagger, and even now tips his curly-brimmed hat slightly to the side. This is the kind of man who influences women. Bombastes frightens the nervous and inexperienced of his own sex, but the man of deportment partly fascinates and partly overawes the other. They take him at his own valuation, and have not skill enough to find out the flaw in the summing up until perhaps it is too late, when they have come so near to him that they are able to appraise him for themselves, and have learnt by bitter experience of what unsound materials he is made. And then let him look out. There is nothing women resent so much as pumpkin manhood—nothing which humiliates them more in their own esteem than to discover that they have been taken in by appearances, and that what they had believed in as solid wood turns out to be only squash.

Women like to rely on men, and dread nothing so much as weakness and vacillation in their male protectors; save indeed those grim and bulky females in whom Hood so much delighted, who take small men *vi et armis*, and subjugate them body and soul, like two-legged poodles trained to fetch and carry at the word of command. But these are exceptions; the average woman prizing strength rather than poodle-like docility. The pumpkin of the Prince Regent cut is generally notorious for laying down the law on all points. His voice is so loud and his manner of speech so dictatorial, that no one dreams of doubting still less of contradicting him, but everybody takes him as he represents himself to be—a man of prompt decision, of boundless resources, a granitic tower of strength to be leant against in all emergencies without the slightest fear of failure; a man who is not only sufficient for himself but strong enough to bear the weaknesses of others. He is famous for giving advice—advice of a vague, rapid, sprawling kind, never quite exact to the circumstances, never quite practical nor to the point—large advice, general in scope but wonderfully positive in tone, and, until you analyze, grandly imposing in effect. Nail him to the point; ask his advice seriously on any question where the responsibility of counsel will rest with him; place yourself in his hands where the consequences of failure will touch him as well as you; and then see to what meagre dimensions your goodly gourd will shrink. The confident assertion drops into a weak hesitation; the arrogant dictum melts into a timid refusal to take such a serious responsibility on himself; you have pricked your windbag, bisected your pumpkin, and henceforth you know the precise weight of substance remaining. Yet mankind sees him exactly where he was before, and he will go about the world in his large, loud way, saying to every one that if you had followed his advice you would have succeeded—supposing you have failed; or, if you have succeeded, he will take all the credit to himself, and say it was he who guided you and showed you how to go in and win. For himself, and his own affairs, he has no more moral stamina than he had leadership for you and yours. The least reverse knocks him over. Care or sorrow, when it touches him, shrivels him up as completely as frost shrivels up the pumpkin. In every circumstance requiring promptitude, coolness, keen perception, just decision, our swaggering man of froth fails

ignominiously; and one hour of real pressure proves incontestably that he was only a pumpkin of imposing presence, good neither as meat nor staff when the time of trial came.

Very often the pumpkin has a wife whose fibre is as close as his is loose, and whose nature is as tough as his is soft; a hard-eyed, thin-lipped, tenacious woman, who speaks little and boasts not at all, but who does all she wishes to do, and whose iron will pins her pumpkin to the wall as the spear of the Bushman pins the elephant or the rhinoceros. It is very curious to see how a blatant blustering man who is so loud and confident abroad, knocks under at home; and how the high-crested deportment which carries things with such a lofty bearing out of doors droops into the meek submission of the henpecked husband so soon as the house-door closes on him, and he is subjected to the pitiless analysis of home. There is no question of flourish then; and if by chance the ambitious crest should make an effort to display itself, the wife knows how to lower it by a few decisive words of a keen-edged kind, and her pumpkin is made to feel sharply enough the difference existing between fibre and pulp. It is almost melancholy to see one of these fine flourishing fellows so subdued. Pumpkin as he may be, it is not pleasant to see him so cut down in his pride; and involuntarily one's sympathies go with him rather than with that tenacious, hard-mouthed wife of his, who would be none the worse perhaps for a little of her husband's essential softness and with less than her own hardness.

How often too, these big fellows have no physical stamina as well as but very shaky moral fibre! A small, wiry light-weight will do twice as much as they; not, of course, where muscle only is wanted, but where the question is of endurance. Large heavy men knock up far sooner than the light-weights; and though size and weight count for something at certain times and on occasions, fibre and tenacity go for more in the long run. In the Crimea, the men who first dropped off from exposure and privation were the magnificently-built Guardsmen—men apparently bred and fed to the highest point of physical perfection; while the undersized little liners, who had nothing to be admired in them, stood the strain gamely, and were brisk and serviceable when the others were either dead or in hospital. So far as we have gone yet, we have not solved the problem of how to combine toughness and bigness, solidity and size, but for the most part fail in the one in proportion as we succeed in the other.

Many of the dark-skinned races are what we may call emotional pumpkins. Their flashing black eyes and swarthy skins seem to be instinct with passion; they look like living furnaces filled with flames and molten metal, terrible fellows, dangerous to meddle with and almost impossible to subdue. But nine times out of ten we find them to be marvellously meek persons, timid, amenable to law, unable to give offence and incapable of taking it—lambs masquerading in tiger-skins. A fair-faced Anglo-Saxon,

with his sensitive blush, good-humoured smile and light blue eyes, has more pluck and pith in him than a whole brigade of certain of these dark-skinned men. He has less ferocity perhaps than they when they are thoroughly roused, though our good-humoured Anglo-Saxon is by no means destitute of ferocity on occasions when his blood is up; but his is ferocity of the quarter-staff and bludgeon stand-up fight kind—the ferocity of strength fairly put out against an adversary, not the tigerish cruelty which is almost always found when moral weakness and physical submission have a momentary triumph and reaction. Cowardly men are like women in their revenge when once they get the upper hand; and their revenge is more cruel than that of the habitually brave man who, after a fair fight, overthrows his opponent. Some of the dark-skinned races look the very ideal of the melodramatic ruffian—operatic brigands painted with broad black lines, and up to any amount of deeds of daring and of crime; but they are only pumpkins at the core. We need not go so far as Calcutta to find them; we get examples nearer home, both in Houndsditch and in Rome; for both Jews and Italians are soft-cored men in spite of their passionate outsides, and both would be better for an extra twist and toughness in their fibres.

Intellectual pumpkins are as common as those of the more specially physical kind. You meet with philosophers and 'thinkers'—perhaps they are poets, perhaps politicians—who flourish out a vague big declamation which, when you reduce it to its essence, you find to be a platitude worth nothing; whipped cream, without any foundation of solid pudding. If they are of the philosophic sort, they quote you Fichte and Hegel, to the bewilderment of your brains unless you have gone into the metaphysical maze on your own account; but they might have put all they have said into half a dozen words of three letters, like a child's first reading lesson. The flourish imposes, and people who cannot analyze take the whipped cream for solid pudding, and think that platitudes dressed in the garb of Fichte and Hegel are utterances worthy of deep respect and admiring wonder.

All the professions which talk, either by word of mouth or in print, are specially given to this manifestation of pumpkinhood. Preachers and authors sprawl and flourish over their small inheritance with a tremendous assumption of vital force and vigorous growth; and weak hands, with weaker heads, find support and shelter in their foliage. Poets too, with a knack for turning out large moulds in which they have run very small ideas, are pumpkins dear to the feminine mind. Have we not our Tupper? had we not our 'Satan' Montgomery? and a few others whom we might catalogue if we cared for the task, each with his multifarious female following and his spiritual harem of ardent admirers? All artists—that is, the men who create, or rather who assume to create—are liable to be proved pumpkins when called on to show themselves solid wood. They talk grandly enough, but when they have to translate their words into deeds, too often the noble aims and immortal efforts they have been advocating tail off into pulp and water,

and we have botches and pot-boilers instead of masterpieces and high art. Perhaps we may take it as a rule that all doers who talk much and boast grandly are of the pumpkin order, and that art, like nature, elaborates best in silence.

Strong-visaged women are often pure pumpkins with a very rough and corrugated outside. It is astonishing how soon they break down, and for all their stern and powerful looks sink under burdens under which a frail little creature, as light as thistledown, will glide along quite easily. Women with black brows and harsh voices—brigandesses by appearance, or like the typical Herodias of unimaginative artists—are often the gentlest and most pithless of their sex, and may be seen acting quite compassionately towards their infants, or vindicating their womanhood by meekly sewing on their husbands' buttons and weeping at their rebukes; while a fair, silver-tongued, languid lady, as soft as if she were made of nothing harder than the traditional cream and rose-leaves, will give up her babies as a prey to unfeeling nurses and let her husband go buttonless and in rags, while she lounges before the fire indifferent to his wrath and callous to his wrongs. There is many a house mistress who looks as if she could use her fists when annoyed, who is absolutely afraid of her servants; and the maid is always the mistress when the one is fibre and the other pulp.

Heaven be praised that the strong-visaged women are not 'clear grit' all through. If they were as hard as they look, the world would go but queerly, and society would have to make new laws for the protection of its weaker male members. But nature is merciful as well as sportive, and while she amuses herself by creating pumpkins of formidable aspect, takes care that the core shall not always correspond to the rind. Like the Athenian images of the satyr which enclosed a god, the black-browed brigandesses and the men of magnificent deportment are sometimes impostors of a quite amiable kind; and when you have once learnt by heart the false analogies of form, you will cease to fear your typical Herodias, to be impressed by your copy of the Prince Regent, or to be influenced by your wordy Hegelian talking platitudes in the philosophic dialect.



## **WIDOWS**

There are widows and widows; there are those who are bereaved and those who are released; those who lose their support and those whose chains are broken; those who are sunk in desolation and those who wake up into freedom. Of the first we will not speak. Theirs is a sorrow too sacred to be publicly handled even with sympathy; but the second demand no such respectful reticence. The widow who is no sooner released from one husband than she plots for another, and the widow who leaps into liberty over the grave of a gaoler, not a lover, are fair game enough. They have always been favourite subjects whereon authors may exercise their wits; and while men are what they are—laughing animals apt to see the humour lying in incongruity, and with a spice of the devil to sharpen that same laughter into satire—they will remain favourite subjects, tragic as the state is when widowhood is deeper than mere outward condition.

There are many varieties of the widow and all are not beautiful. For one, there is the widow who is bent on re-marrying whether men like it or not; that thing of prey who goes about the world seeking whom she may devour; that awful creature who bears down on her victims with a vigour in her assaults which puts to flight the popular fancy about the weaker sex and the natural distribution of power. No hawk poised over a brood of hedge birds, no shark cruising steadily towards a shoal of small fry, no piratical craft sailing under a free flag and accountable to no law save success, was ever more formidable to the weaker things pursued than is the hawk widow to men when she is bent on re-marrying. She knows so much!—there is not a manœuvre by which a victory can be stolen that she has not mastered and she is not afraid of even the most desperate measures. When she has once struck, he would be a clever man and a strong one who should escape her. Generally left but meagrely provided for in worldly goods—else her game would not be difficult—she makes up for her financial poverty by her wealth of bold resources, and by the courage with which she takes her own fortunes in hand and, with her own, those of her more eligible masculine associates. She is a woman of purpose and lives for an end; and that end is remarriage, with the most favourable settlement that can be obtained by her lawyer from his. If fate has dealt hardly by her—though, may be, compassionately by her successive spouses—and has landed her in the widowed state twice or thrice, she is in nowise daunted and as little abashed. She merely refits after a certain time of anchorage, and goes out into the open again for a repetition of her chance. She has no notion of a perpetuity of weeds, and, though she may have cleared her half century with a margin besides, thinks the suggestive orange-blossoms of the bride infinitely more desirable than the fruitless heliotrope of the widow. If one husband is taken, she remembers the old proverb, and reflects on the many, quite as

good, who are left potentially subject to her choice. And somehow she manages. It has been said that any woman can marry any man if she determines to do so, and follows on the line of her determination with tenacity and common-sense.

The hawk widow exemplifies the truth of this saying. She determines upon marriage; and she usually succeeds; the question being one of victim only, not of sacrifice. One has to fall to her share; there is no help for it; and the whole contest is, which shall it be? which is strongest to break her bonds? which craftiest to slip out of them? which most resolute not to bear them from the beginning? This the straggling covey must settle among themselves the best way they can. When the hawk pounces down upon its quarry, it is *saue qui peut!* But all cannot be saved. One has to be caught; and the choice is determined partly by chance and partly by relative strength. When the widow of experience and resolve bears down on her prey, the result is equally certain. Floundering avails nothing; struggling and splashing are just as futile; one among the crowd has to come to the slaughter, like Mrs. Bond's ducks, and to assist at his own immolation. The best thing he can do is to make a handsome surrender, and to let the world of men and brothers believe he rather likes his position than not.

But there are pleasanter types of the re-marrying widow than this. There is the widow of the Wadman kind, who has outlived her grief and is not disinclined to a repetition of the matrimonial experiment, if asked humbly by an experimenter after her own heart. But she must be asked humbly that she may grant in a pretty, tender, womanly way—if not quite so timidly as a girl, yet as becomingly in her degree, and with that peculiar fascination which nothing but the combination of experience and modesty can give. The widow of the Wadman kind is no creature of prey, neither shark nor hawk; at the worst she is but a cooing dove, making just the sweetest little noise in the world, the tenderest little call to indicate her whereabouts, and to show that she is lonely and feels a-cold. She sits close, waiting to be found, and does not ramp and dash about like the hawk sisterhood; neither does she pretend that she is unwilling to be found, still less deny that a soft warm nest, well lined and snugly sheltered, is better than a lonely branch stretching out comfortless and bare into the bleak wide world. She, too, is almost sure to get what she wants, with the advantage of being voluntarily chosen and not unwillingly submitted to.

This is the kind of woman who is always mildly but thoroughly happy in her married life; unless indeed her husband should be a brute, which heaven forefend. She lives in peace and bland contentment while the fates permit, and when he dies she buries him decently and laments him decorously; but she thinks it folly to spend her life in weeping by the side of his cold grave, when her tears can do no good to either of them. Rather she thinks it a proof of her love for him, and the evidence of how true was her happiness, that she should elect to give him a successor. Her blessed experience in the past has

made her trustful of the future; and because she has found one man faithful she thinks that all are Abdiels. As a rule, this type of woman does find men pleasant; and by her own nature she ensures domestic happiness. She is always tenderly, and never passionately, in love, even with the husband she has loved the best. She gives in to no excesses to the right nor to the left. Her temperament is of that serene moonlight kind which does not fatigue others nor wear out its possessor. Without ambition or the power to fling herself into any absorbing occupation, she lives only to please and be pleased at home; and if she be not a wife, wearing her light fetters lovingly and proud that she is fettered, she is nothing. As some women are born mothers and others are born nuns, so is the Wadman woman a born wife, and shines in no other character nor capacity. But in this she excels; and knowing this, she sticks to her rôle, how frequently so ever the protagonist may be changed.

There are widows, however, who have no thought nor desire for remaining anything but widows—who have gained the worth of the world in their condition, '*Jeune, riche, et veuve—quel bonheur!*' says the French wife, eyeing '*mon mari*' askance. Can the most exacting woman ask for more? And truly such a one is in the most enviable position possible to a woman, supposing always that she has not lost in her husband the man she loved. If she has lost only the man who sat by right at the same hearth with herself—perhaps the man who quarrelled with her across the ashes—she has lost her burden and gained her release.

The cross of matrimony lies heavy on many a woman who never takes the world into her confidence, and who bears in absolute silence what she has not the power to cast from her. Perhaps her husband has been a man of note, a man of learning, of elevated station, a political or a philanthropic power. She alone knew the fretfulness, the petty tyranny, the miserable smallness at home of the man of large repute whom his generation conspired to honour, and whose public life was a mark for the future to date by. When he died the press wrote his eulogy and his elegy; but his widow, when she put on her weeds, sang softly in her own heart a pæan to the great King of Freedom, and whispered to herself *Laudamus* with a sigh of unutterable relief. To such a woman widowhood has no sentimental regrets. She has come into possession of the goods for which perhaps she sold herself; she is young enough to enjoy the present and to project a future; she has the free choice of a maid and the free action of a matron, as no other woman has. She may be courted and she need not be chaperoned, nor yet forced to accept. Experience has mellowed and enriched her; for though the asperities of her former condition were sharp while they lasted, they have not permanently roughened nor embittered her. Then the sense of relief gladdens, while the sense of propriety subdues, her; and the delicate mixture of outside melancholy, tempered with internal warmth, is wonderfully enticing. Few men know how to resist that gentle sadness which does not preclude the sweetest sympathy with pleasures in which she may not join—with happiness which is, alas!

denied her. It gives an air of such profound unselfishness; it asks so mutely, so bewitchingly, for consolation!

Even a hard man is moved at the sight of a pretty young widow in the funereal black of her first grief, sitting apart with a patient smile and eyes cast meekly down, as one not of the world though in it. Her loss is too recent to admit of any thought of reparation; and yet what man does not think of that time of reparation? and if she be more than usually charming in person and well dowered in purse, what man does not think of himself as the best repairer she could take? Then, as time goes on and she glides gracefully into the era of mitigated grief, how beautiful is her whole manner, how tasteful her attire! The most exquisite colours of the prismatic scale look garish beside her dainty tints, and the untempered mirth of happy girls is coarse beside her subdued admission of moral sunshine. Greys as tender as a dove's breast; regal purples which have a glow behind their gloom; stately silks of sombre black softly veiled by clouds of gauzy white or brightened with the 'dark light' of sparkling jet—all speak of passing time and the gradual blooming of the spring after the sadness of the winter; all symbolize the flowers which are growing on the sod that covers the dear departed; all hint at a melting of the funereal gloom into the starlight of a possible bridal. She begins too to take pleasure in the old familiar things of life. She steals into a quiet back seat at the Opera; she just walks through a quadrille; she sees no harm in a fête or flower-show, if properly companioned. Winter does not last for ever; and a life-long mourning is a wearisome prospect. So she goes through her degrees in accurate order, and comes out at the end radiant.

For when the faint shadows cast by the era of mitigated grief fade away, she is the widow par excellence—the blooming widow, young, rich, gay, free; with the world on her side, her fortune in her hand, the ball at her foot. She is the freest woman alive; freer even than any old maid to be found. Freedom, indeed, comes to the old maid when too late to enjoy it; at least in certain directions; for while she is young she is necessarily in bondage, and when parents and guardians leave her at liberty, the world and Mrs. Grundy take up the reins and hold them pretty tight. But the widow is as thoroughly emancipated from the conventional bonds which confine the free action of a maid as she is from those which fetter the wife; and only she herself knows what she has lost and gained. She bore her yoke well while it pressed on her. It galled her but she did not wince; only when it was removed, did she become fully conscious of how great had been the burden, from her sense of infinite relief through her freedom. The world never knew that she had passed under the harrow; probably therefore it wonders at her cheerfulness, with the dear departed scarce two years dead; and some say how sweetly resigned she is, and others how unfeeling. She is neither. She is simply free after having lived in bondage; and she is glad in consequence. But she is dangerous. In fact, she is the most dangerous of all women to men's peace of mind. She does not want to marry

again—does not mean to marry again for many years to come, if ever; granted; but this does not say that she is indifferent to admiration or careless of men's society. And being without serious intentions herself, she does not reflect that she may possibly mislead and deceive others who have no such cause as she has to beware of the pleasant folly of love and its results.

In the exercise of her prerogative as a free woman, able to cultivate the dearest friendships with men and fearlessly using her power, she entangles many a poor fellow's heart which she never wished to engage more than platonically, and crushes hopes which she had not the slightest intention to raise. Why cannot men be her friends? she asks, with a pretty, pleading look—a tender kind of despair at the wrong-headedness of the stronger sex. But, tender as she is, she does not easily yield even when she loves. The freedom she has gone through so much to gain she does not rashly throw away; and if ever the day comes when she gives it up into the keeping of another—and for all her protestations it comes sometimes—the man to whom she succumbs may congratulate himself on a victory more flattering to his vanity, and more complete in its surrender of advantages, than he could have gained over any other woman. Belle or heiress, of higher rank or of greater fame than himself, no unmarried woman could have made such a sacrifice in her marriage as did this widow of means and good looks, when she laid her freedom, her joyous present and potential future, in his hand. He will be lucky if he manages so well that he is never reproached for that sacrifice—if his wife never looks back regretfully to the time when she was a widow—if there are no longing glances forward to possibilities ahead, mingled with sighs at the difficulty of retracing a step when made. On the whole, if a woman can live without love, or with nothing stronger than a tender sentimental friendship, widowhood is the most blissful state she can attain. But if she be of a loving nature and fond of home, finding her own happiness in the happiness of others and indifferent to freedom—thinking, indeed, that feminine freedom is only another word for desolation—she will be miserable until she has doubled her experience and carried on the old into the new.

**DOLLS.**

The love of dolls is instinctive with girl children; and a nursery without some of these silent simulacra for the amusement of the little maids is a very lifeless affair. But outside the nursery door dolls are stupid things enough; and, whether improvised of wisped-up bundles of rags or made of the costliest kind of composition, they are at the best mere pretences for the pastime of babies, not living creatures to be loved nor artistic creations to be admired. Certainly they are pretty in their own way, and some are made to simulate human actions quite cleverly; and one of their charms with children is that they can be treated like sentient beings without a chance of retaliation. They can be scolded for being naughty; put to bed in broad daylight for a punishment; seated in the corner with their impassive faces turned to the wall, just as the little ones themselves are dealt with; the doll all the time smiling exactly as it smiled before, its round blue beads staring just as they stared before; neither scolding nor cornering making more impression on its sawdust soul than do little missy's sobs and tears when nurse is cross and dolly is her only friend. But the child has had its hour of play and make-believe sentiment of companionship and authority; and so, if the doll can do no good of itself, it can at least be the occasion of pleasantness to others.

Now there are women who are dolls in all but the mere accident of material. The doll proper is a simple structure of wax or wood, 'its knees and elbows glued together;' and the human doll is a complex machine of flesh and blood. But, saving such structural differences, these women are as essentially dolls as those in the bazaar which open and shut their eyes at the word of command enforced by a wire, and squeak when you pinch them in the middle. There are women who seem born into the world only as the playthings and make-believes of human life. As impassive as the waxen creatures in the nursery, no remonstrance touches them and no experience teaches them. Their final cause seems to be to look pretty, to be always in perfect drawing-room order, and to be the occasions by which their friends and companions are taught patience and self-denial. And they perfectly fulfil their destiny; which may be so much carried to their credit. A doll woman is hopelessly useless and can do nothing with her brains or her hands. In distress or sickness she can only sit by you and look as sorrowful as her round smooth face will permit; but she has not a helping suggestion to make, not a fraction of practical power to put forth.

When a man has married a doll wife he has assigned himself to absolute loneliness or a double burden. He cannot live with his pretty toy in any more reality of sympathy than does a child with her puppet. He can tell her nothing of his affairs, nothing of his

troubles nor of his thoughts, because she can impart no new idea, even from the woman's point of view, not from want of heart but from want of brains to understand another's life. Is she not a doll? and does not the very essence of her dollhood lie in this want of perceptive faculty both for things and feelings? What are the hot flushes of passion, the bitter tears of grief, the frenzy of despair, to her? She sees them; and she wonders that people can be so silly as to make themselves and her so uncomfortable; but of the depth of the anguish they express she knows no more than does her waxen prototype when little missy sobs over it in her arms and confides her sorrows to its deaf ears. Whatever anxieties oppress her husband, he must keep them to himself, he cannot share them with her; and the last shred of his credit, like the last effort of his strength, must be employed in maintaining his toy wife in the fool's paradise where alone she can make her habitation. Many a man's back has broken under the strain of such a burden; and many a ruined fortune might have been held together and repaired when damaged, had it not been for the exigencies and necessities of the living doll, who had to be spared all want or inconvenience at the cost of everything else. How many men are groaning in spirit at this moment over the infatuation that made them sacrifice the whole worth of life for the sake of a pretty face and a plastic manner!

The doll woman is as helpless practically as she is useless morally. If she is in personal danger, she either faints or becomes dazed, according to her physiological conditions. Sometimes she is hysterical and frantic, and then she is actively troublesome. In general, however, she is just so much dead weight on hand, to be thought for as well as protected; a living corpse to be carried on the shoulders of those who are struggling for their own lives. She can foresee no possibilities, measure no distances, think of no means of escape. Never quick nor ready, pressure paralyzes such wits as she possesses; and it is not from selfishness so much as from pure incapacity to help herself or to serve others that the poor doll falls down in a helpless heap of self-surrender, and lets her very children perish before her eyes without making an effort to protect them.

As a mother indeed, the doll woman is perhaps more unsatisfactory than in any other character. She gives up her nursery into the absolute keeping of her nurse, and does not attempt to control nor to interfere. This again, is not from want of affection, but from want of capacity. In her tepid way she has a heart, if only half-vitalized like the rest of her being; and she is by no means cruel. Indeed, she has not force enough to be cruel nor wicked anyhow; her worst offence being a passive kind of selfishness, not from greed but from inactivity, by which she is made simply useless for the general good. As for her children, she understands neither their moral nature nor their physical wants; and beyond a universal 'Oh, naughty!' if the little ones express their lives in the rampant manner proper to young things, or as a universal 'Oh, let them have it!' if there is a howl over what is forbidden or unwise, she has no idea of discipline or management. If they tease her, they are sent away; if they are naughty, they are whipped by papa or nurse; if

they are ill, the doctor is summoned and they have medicine as he directs; but none of the finer and more intimate relations usual between mother and child exist in the home of the doll mother. The children are the property of the nurse only; unless indeed the father happens to be a specially affectionate and a specially domestic man, and then he does the work of the mother—at the best clumsily, but at the worst better than the doll could have done it.

Very shocking and revolting are all the more tragic facts of human life to the smooth-skinned easy-going doll. When it comes to her own turn to bear pain, she wonders how a good God can permit her to suffer. Had she brains enough to think, the great mystery of pain would make her atheistical in her angry surprise that she should be so hardly dealt with. As dolls have a constitutional immunity from suffering, her first initiation into even a minor amount of anguish is generally a tremendous affair; and though it may be pain of a quite natural and universal character, she is none the less indignant and astonished at her portion. She invariably thinks herself worse treated than her sisters, and cannot be made to understand that others suffer as much as, and more than, herself. As she has always shrunk from witnessing trouble of any kind, and as what she may have seen has passed over her mind without leaving any impression, she comes to her own sorrows totally inexperienced; and one of the most pitiable sights in the world is that of a poor doll woman writhing in the grasp of physical agony, and broken down or rendered insanely impatient by what other women can bear without a murmur.

When she is in the presence of the moral tragedies of life, she is as lost and bewildered as she is with the physical. All sin and crime are to her odd and inexplicable. She cannot pity the sinner, because she cannot understand the temptation; and she cannot condemn from any lofty standpoint, because she has not mind enough to see the full meaning of iniquity. It is simply something out of the ordinary run of her life, and the doll naturally dislikes disturbance, whether of habit or of thought. Yet if a noted criminal came and sat down by her, she would probably whisper to her next friend, 'How shocking!' but she would simper when he spoke, and perhaps in her heart feel flattered by the attention of even so doubtful a notoriety. If she be a doll with a bias towards naughtiness, the utmost limit to which she can go is a mild kind of curiosity about the outsides of things—the mere husk and rind of the forbidden fruit—such as wondering how such and such people look who have done such dreadful things; and what they felt the next morning; and how could they ever come to think of such horrors! She would be more interested in hearing about the dress and hair and eyes of the female plaintiff or defendant in a famous cause than many other women would be; but she would not give herself the trouble to read the evidence, and she would take all her opinions secondhand. But whether the colour of the lady's gown was brown or blue, and whether she wore her hair wisped or plaited, would be matters in which she would take as intense an interest as is possible to her.



The utmost limit to which enthusiasm can be carried with her is in the matter of dress and fashion; and the only subject that thoroughly arouses her is the last new colour, or the latest eccentricity of costume. Talk to her of books, and she will go to sleep; even novels, her sole reading, she forgets half an hour after she has turned the last page; while of any other kind of literature she is as profoundly ignorant as she is of mathematics; but she can discuss the mysteries of fashion with something like animation, these being to her what the wire is to the eyes of the dolls in the bazaar. Else she has no power of conversation. At the head of her own table she sits like a pretty waxen dummy, and can only simper out a few commonplaces, or simper without the commonplaces, satisfied if she is well appointed and looks lovely, and if her husband seems tolerably contented with the dinner. She is more in her element at a ball, where she is only asked to dance and not wanted to talk; but her ball-room days do not last for ever, and when they are over she has no available retreat.

If a rich doll woman is a mistake, a poor one who has been rich is about the greatest infliction that can be laid on a suffering household. Not all the teaching of experience can make wax and glue into flesh and blood, and nothing can train the human doll into a dignified or a capable womanhood. She still dresses in faded finery—which she calls keeping up appearances; and still has pretensions which no 'inexorable logic of facts' can destroy. She spends her money on sweets and ribbons and ignores the family need for meat and calico; and she sits by the fireside dozing over a trashy novel, while her children are in rags and her house is given over to disorder. But then she has a craze for the word 'lady-like,' and thinks it synonymous with ignorance and helplessness. She abhors the masculine-minded woman who helps her—sister, cousin, daughter—so far as she can abhor anything; but she is glad to lean on her strength, despite this abhorrence, and, while grumbling at her masculinity, does not disdain to take advantage of her power. The doll is only passively disagreeable though; and for all that she carps under her breath, will remain in any position in which she is placed. She will not act, but she will let you act unhindered; which is something gained when you have to deal with fools.

This quiescence of hers passes with the world for plasticity and amiability; it is neither; it is simply indolence and want of originating force. While she is young, she is nice enough to those who care only for a pretty face and a character founded on negatives; but when a man's pride of life has gone, and he has come into the phase of weakness, or under the harrow of affliction, or into the valley of the shadow of death, then she becomes in sorrowful truth the chain and bullet which make him a galley-slave for the remainder of his days, and which sign him to drudgery and despair.

As an old woman the doll has not one charm. She has learned none of that handiness, come to none of that grand maternal power of helping others, which should accompany

maturity and age and has still to be thought for and protected, to the exclusion of the younger and naturally more helpless, as when she was young herself, and beautiful and fascinating, and men thought it a privilege to suffer for her sake. Nine times out of ten she has lost her temper as well as her complexion, and has become peevish and unreasonable. She gets fat and rouges; but she will not consent to get old. She takes to false hair, dyes, padded stays, arsenic or 'anti-fat,' and to artful contrivances of every description; but alas! there is no 'dolly's hospital' for her as there used to be for her battered old prototype in the nursery lumber-closet; and, whether she likes it or not, she has to succumb to the inevitable decree, and to become faded, worn out, unlovely, till the final coup de grâce is given and the poor doll is no more. Poor, weak, frivolous doll! it requires some faith to believe that she is of any good whatsoever in this overladen life of ours; but doubtless she has her final uses, though it would puzzle a Sanhedrim of wise men to discover them. Perhaps in the great readjustment of the future she may have her place and her work assigned to her in some inter-stellar Phalansterie; when the meaning of her helpless earthly existence shall be made manifest and its absurd uselessness atoned for by some kind of celestial 'charing.'

**CHARMING WOMEN.**

There are certain women who are invariably spoken of as charming. We never hear any other epithet applied to them. They are not said to be pretty, nor amiable, nor clever, though they may be all three, but simply charming; which we may take as a kind of verbal amalgam—the concentration and concretion of all praise. The main feature about these charming women is their intense feminality. There is no blurring of the outlines here; no confusion of qualities admirable enough in themselves but slightly out of place considering the sex; no Amazonian virtues which leave one in doubt as to whether we have not before us Achilles in petticoats rather than a true Pyrrha or a more tender Deidamia.

A charming woman is woman all over—one who places her glory in being a woman and has no desire to be anything else. She is a woman rather than a human being, and a lady rather than a woman. One of her characteristics is the exquisite grace of her manner which so sweetly represents the tender nature within. She has not an angle anywhere. If she were to be expressed geometrically, Hogarth's Line of Beauty is the sole figure that could be used for her. She is flowing, graceful, bending in mind as in body; she is neither self-asserting nor aggressive, neither rigid nor narrow; she is a creature who glides gracefully through life, and adjusts herself to her company and her circumstances in a manner little less than marvellous; working her own way without tumult or sharpness; creeping round the obstacles she cannot overthrow, and quietly wearing down more friable opposition with that gentle persistency which does so much more than turmoil and disturbance.

Even if enthusiastic—which she is for art, either as music, as painting, or yet as poetry—she is enthusiastic in such a sweet and graceful way that no one can be offended by a fire which shines and does not burn. There is no touch of scorn about her and no assumption of superior knowledge. She speaks to you, poor ignorant Philistine, with the most flattering conviction that you follow her in all her flights; and when she comes out, quite naturally, with her pretty little bits of recondite lore or professional technicalities, you cannot be so boorish as to ask for an explanation of these trite matters which she makes so sure you must understand. Are you not an educated person with a soul to be saved? can you then be ignorant of things with which every one of culture is familiar? She discourses confidentially of musicians and painters unknown to fame, and speaks as if she knew the secret doings of the Conservatoire and the R. A. council-chamber alike. The models and the methods, the loves and the hates, of the artistic world are to her things of every-day life, and you cannot tell her that she is shooting her delicate shafts

wide of the mark, and that you know no more of what she means than if she were talking in the choicest Arabic.

If she has been abroad—and she generally has been more or less—she will pour out her tender little rhapsodies about palazzi and musei of which you have never heard, but every room of which she assumes you know by heart; and she will speak of out-of-the-way churches, and grim old castles perched upon vine-clad mounts, as if you were as well acquainted with them as with your native hamlet. She will bring into her discourse all manner of Italian technicalities, as if you understood the subject as well as she herself understands it; though your learning is limited to a knowledge of how much has been done in jute and tallow this last half year, or how many pockets of hops went off in the market last week. If she has a liking for high life and titles—and what charming woman has not?—she will mention the names of all manner of counts and dukes and monsignori unknown to English society, as though they were her brothers; but if you were to interrupt the gentle ripple of her speech with such rude breakwaters as 'who?' and 'what?' the charming woman would think you a horrid bore—and no man would willingly face that humiliation. One may be a rhinoceros in one's own haunts, but, as the fable tells us, even rhinoceroses are ashamed of their parentage when among gazelles.

Never self-asserting, never contradictory, only sweetly and tenderly putting you right when you blunder, the charming woman nevertheless always makes you feel her superiority. True, she lays herself as it were at your feet and gives you a thousand delicate flatteries—indeed among her specialities is that of being able to set you on good terms with yourself by her art of subtle flattery; but despite her own self-abasement and your exaltation you cannot but feel her superiority; and, although she is too charming to acknowledge what would wound your pride, you know that she feels it too, and tries to hide it. All of which has the effect of making you admire her still more for her grace and tact.

The charming woman is generally notoriously in love with her husband, who is almost always inferior to her in birth, acquirements, manner, appearance. This Titania-like affection of hers only shows her feminine qualities of sacrifice and wifely devotion to greater advantage, and makes other men envy more ferociously the lucky fellow who has drawn such a prize. The husband of a charming woman is indeed lucky in the world's esteem; no man more so. Though he may be one of the most ordinary, perhaps unpleasant, fellows you know, with a sour face, an underbred air, and by no means famous in his special sphere, his wife speaks of him enthusiastically as so good, so clever, so delightful! No one knows how good he is, she says; though of course he has his little peculiarities of temper and the rest of it, and perhaps every one would not bear with them as she does. But then she knows him, and knows his wonderful worth and value! If they are not seen much together, that comes from causes over which they have

no control, not from anything like disinclination to each other's society. Certainly, for so happy a marriage, it is a little surprising how very seldom they are together; and how all her friends are hers only and not his, and how much she goes into society without him. On the whole, counting hours, they live very much more apart than united; but that is the misfortune of his career, of his health, or of hers—a misfortune due to any cause but that of diversity of tastes, inharmoniousness of pursuits, or lack of love.

Full of home affection and the tenderest sentiment as she is, the charming woman does sometimes the oddest-looking things, which a rough little domestic creature without graceful pretensions would not dream of doing. Her child is lying dangerously ill, perhaps dying, and she appears at the grand ball of the season, subdued certainly—how well that sweet melancholy becomes her!—but always graceful, always thoughtful for others, and attentive to the minutest detail of her social duties. And though indeed, she will tell you, she does not know how she got dressed at all, because of the state of cruel anxiety in which she is, yet she is undeniably the best dressed woman in the room and the most carefully appointed. It is against her own will that she is there, you may be sure; but she has been forced to sacrifice herself, and tear herself away for an hour. The exigencies of society are so merciless!—the world is such a terrible Juggernaut! she says, raising her eyes with plaintive earnestness to yours in the breathing-times of the waltz.

She has another trial if her husband is ordered out to Canada or the West Indies. Dearly as she loves him, and though she is heart-broken at the idea of the separation, yet her health cannot stand the climate; and she must obey her doctor's orders. She is so delicate, you know—all charming women are delicate—and the doctor tells her she could not live six months either in Toronto or Port Royal. If her lord and master had to go on diplomatic service to St. Petersburg or Madrid, she might be able to stand the climate then; but that is different. A dull station, without any of her favourite pleasures, would be more than she could bear; so she remains behind, goes out into society, and writes her husband tender and amusing letters once a month.

The charming woman is the gentlest of her sex. She would not do a cruel thing nor say an unkind word for the world. When she tells you the unpleasant things which ill-natured people have said of your friends or hers, she tells them in the sweetest and dearest way imaginable. She is so sure there is not a syllable of truth in it all; and what a shame it is that people should be so ill-natured! In the gentle tone of sympathy and deprecation peculiar to her, she gives you all the ugly and uncomfortable reports which have come to her, and of which you have never heard a breath until this moment. Yet it is you who are stupid, not she who is initiative, for she tells them to you as if they were of patent notoriety to the whole world; only she does not believe them, remember! She takes the most scrupulous care to deny and defend as she retails, and you cannot class her with the tribe of the ill-natured whom she censures, setting, as she does, the whole

strength of her gentle words and generous disbelief in opposition to these ugly rumours. Yet you wish she had not told you. Her disclaimers spring so evidently from the affectionate amiability of her own mind, which cannot bear to think evil, that they have not much effect upon you. The excuse dies away from your memory, but the ill-savoured report roots; and you feel that you have lost your respect for your former friends for ever; or, if they were only hers, then, that nothing should tempt you to know them. There is no smoke without some fire, you think; and the charming woman cannot possibly have kindled the flame herself out of sticks and leaves and rubbish of her own collecting. But how sweet and charitable she was when she told you! how much you love her for her tenderness of nature! what a guileless and delightful creature she is!

The charming woman is kind and graceful, but she does not command the stronger virtues. She flatters sweetly, but, it must be confessed, she fibs as sweetly. She sometimes owns to this, but only to fibs that do more good than harm—fibs into the utterance of which she is forced for the sake of peace and to avoid mischief. It is a feminine privilege, she says; and men agree with her. Truth at all times—bold, uncompromising, stern-faced truth—is coarse and indelicate she says; a masculine quality as little fitted for women as courage or great bodily strength. Her husband knows that she fibs; her friends at times find her out too; but though the women throw it at her as an accusation, the men accept it as a quality without which she would be less the charming woman that she is; and not only forgive it, but like her the better for the grace and tact and suppleness she displays in the process of manufacture. Hers are not the severer virtues, but the gentler, the more insinuating; and absolute truth—truth at any price and on all occasions—does not come into the list.

Charming women, with their plastic manners and non-aggressive force, always have their own way in the end. They are the women who influence by unseen methods and who shrink from any open display of power. They know that their métier is to soothe men, to put them on good terms with themselves, and so to get the benefit of the good humour they induce; and they dread nothing so much as a contest of wills. They coax and flatter for their rights, and consequently they are given privileges in excess of their rights; whereas the women who take their rights, as things to which they are entitled without favour, lose them and their privileges together. This art of self-abasement for future exaltation is one which it is given only to few to carry to perfection, but no woman is really charming without it. In fact it is part of her power; and she knows it. Though charming women are decidedly the favourites with men, they are careful to keep on good terms with their own sex; and in society you may often see them almost ostentatiously surrounded by women only, whom they take pains to please or exert themselves to amuse, but whom they throw into the shade in the most astonishing way.

Whatever these really charming women are, or do, or wear, is exactly the right thing; and every other woman fails in proportion to the distance she is removed from this model. When a charming woman is dressed richly, the simpler costumes of her friends look poor and mean; when she is *à la bergère*, the Court dresses about her are vulgar; when she is gay, quietness is dullness; when she is quiet, laughter is coarse. And there is no use in trying to imitate her. She is the very Will-o'-the-wisp of her circle, and no sooner shows her light here than she flits away there; she has no sooner set one fashion, which her admiring friends have adopted with infinite pains and trouble, than she has struck out a new one which renders all the previous labour in vain. This is part of her very essence; and the originality which is simply perfection that cannot be repeated, and not eccentricity that no one will imitate, comes in as one of the finest and most potent of her charms. When she lends her patterns to her friends, or tells them this or that little secret, she laughs in her heart, knowing that she has shown them a path they cannot possibly follow and raised up a standard to which they cannot attain. And even should they do either, then she knows that, by the time they have begun to get up to her, she will be miles away, and that no art whatever can approximate them to her as she is. What she was she tosses among them as a worn-out garment; what she is they cannot be. She remains still the unapproachable, the inimitable, the charming woman par excellence of her set, whom none can rival.

**APRON-STRINGS.**

Among other classifications, the world of men and women may be divided into those who wear aprons and those who are tied to the strings thereof—those who determine the length of the tether and those who are bound to browse within its circuit—those who hold the reins and those who go bitted. All men and women are fond of power, but there is a wide difference in the ways in which they use it. To men belong the grave political tyrannies at which nations revolt and history is outraged, to women the small conventional laws framed against individual liberty by Mrs. Grundy and society; men rule with rods of iron and drive with whips of steel, women shorten the tether and tie up close to apron-strings; men coerce, women forbid. In fact, the difference is just that which lies between action and negation, compulsion and restraint; between the masculine jealousy of equality and the feminine fear of excess. If men debar women from all entrance into their larger sphere, women try to dwarf men's lives to their own measure, and not a few hold themselves aggrieved when they fail. They think that everything which is impossible to them should be forbidden to others, and they maintain that to be a lamentable extreme which is simply in excess of their own powers. Not content with supremacy in the home which is their own undisputed domain, nor satisfied with binding on men the various rules distinguishing life in the drawing-room, the dining-room and the breakfast-parlour, they would, if they could, carry their code outside, and sweep into its narrow net the club-house and the mess-table, the billiard-room and the race-course, and wherever else men congregate together—delivered from the bondage of feminine conventionalities.

For almost all women have an uneasy feeling when their men are out of sight, enjoying themselves in their own way. They fear on all sides—both bodily harm and moral evil; and regard men's rougher sports and freer thoughts as a hen regards her wilful ducklings when they take to the water in which she would be drowned, and leave her high and dry lamenting their danger and self-destruction. The man they love best for his manliness they would, in their loving cowardice, do their utmost to make effeminate; and, while adoring him for all that makes him bold and strong in thought as well as in frame, they would tie him up to their apron-strings, and keep him there till he became as soft and narrow as themselves. Not that they would wish to do so; if you asked them they would tell you quite the contrary. But this would be the result if they had their own way, their love being at all times more timid than confident.

To home-staying women, a brilliant husband courted by the world and loving what courts him, is a painful cross to bear, however much he may be beloved—the pain, in



fact, being proportionate to the love. Perhaps no life exemplifies this so much as Moore's. Poor "Bessy" suffered many things because of the looseness of the apron-string by which her roving husband was tied, and the length of the tether which he allowed himself. Farfallone amoroso as he was, his incessant flutterings out of range and reach caused her many a sad hour; and in after years she was often heard to say that the happiest time of her life was when his mind had begun to fail, for then she had him all to herself and no one came in between them—no great world swept him away to be the idol of a salon, and left her alone at home casting up her accounts with life and love, and quaking at the result that came out. When the brilliancy and the idolatry came to an end, then her turn began; and she tied up her dulled and faltering idol close to her side for ever after, and was happier to have him there helpless, affectionate, dependent and imbecile than when he was at his brightest—and a rover.

Many a wife has felt the same when sickness has broken down the strong man's power to a weakness below her own, and made her, so long the inferior, now the more powerful of the two, and the supreme. She gathers up the reins with that firm, tight hand peculiar to women, and ties her master to her apron-string so that he cannot escape. It is quite a matter of pride with her that she has got him into such good order. He obeys her so implicitly about his medicines, and going to bed early, and wrapping himself up, and avoidance of draughts and night-air, that she feels all the reflected glory of one who has conquered a hero. The Samson who used to defy the elements and break her careful strings like bands of tow, has at last laid his head in her lap and suffered himself to be covered by her apron. It is worth while to have had the anxiety and loss of his illness for the sake of the submission resulting; and she generally ends by gaining a hold over him which he can never shake off again.

It is pitiful though, to see the stronger life thus dwarfed and bound. But women like it; and while the need for it lasts men must submit. The danger is lest the habit of the apron-string should become permanent; for it is so perilously pleasant to be petted and made much of by women, that few men can resist the temptation when it offers; and many have been ruined for the remainder of their days by an illness which gave them up into the keeping of wife and sisters—those fireside Armidas who will coddle all the real manliness out of their finest heroes, if they are let. If this kind of thing occurs at the break of life, the mezzo cammino between maturity and age, it is doubly difficult to throw off; and many a man who had good years of vigour and strength, before him if he had been kept up to the mark, sinks all at once into senility because his womankind got frightened at that last small attack of his, and thought the best way to preserve him from another was to weaken him by over-care out of all wish for dangerous exposure.

Perhaps the greatest misfortune that can befall a man is to have been an only son brought up by a timid widow mother. It is easy to see at a glance, among a crowd of

boys, who has been educated under exclusively feminine influence. The long curled shining hair, the fantastic tunic—generally a kind of hybrid between a tunic and a frock—the lavish use of embroidery, the soft pretty-behaved manner, the clean unroughened hands, all mark the boy of whom his mother has so often wished that he had been a girl, and whom she has made as much like a girl as possible. His intellectual education has been as unboylike as his daily breeding. Mothers' boys are taught to play the piano, to amuse themselves with painting, or netting, or perhaps a little woolwork in the evenings—anything to keep them quietly seated by the family table, without an outbreak of boyish restlessness or inconvenient energy; but they are never taught to ride, to hunt, to shoot, to swim, to play at cricket, football, nor billiards, unless a stalwart uncle happens to be about who takes the reins in his own hand at times, and insists on having a word to say to his nephew's education.

There is danger in all, and evil in some, of these things; and women cannot bear that those they love should run the risk of either. Wherefore their boys are modest and virtuous truly, but they are not manly; and when they go out into the world, as they must sooner or later, they are either laughed at for their priggishness, or they go to the bad by the very force of reaction. The mother has allowed them to learn nothing that will be of solid use to them, and they enter the great arena wholly unprepared either to fight or to resist, to push their own way or to take their own part. They have been kept tied up to the apron-string to the last moment, and only when absolutely forced by the necessity of events will she cut the knot and let them go free. But she holds on to the last moment. Even when the time comes for college-life and learning, she often goes with her darling, and takes lodgings in the town, that she may be near at hand to watch over his health and morals, and continue her careful labours for his destruction.

The chances are that a youth so brought up never becomes a real man, nor worth his salt anyhow. He is a prig if he is good, a debauchee of the worst kind if he kicks over the traces at all. He is more likely the first, carrying the mark of the apron-string round his wrist for life. Like a tame falcon used to the hood and the perch and the lure home, no matter what the temptation of the quarry afield, he is essentially a domestic man, at ease only in the society of women; a fussy man; a small-minded man; delicate in health; with a dread of strong measures, physical, political, or intellectual; a crotchety man given to passing quackeries; but not a man fit for man's society nor for man's work. When there are many boys, instead of only one, in a widow's family, the opposite of all this is the case. So soon as they have escaped from the nursery, they have escaped from all control whatsoever; and if one wants to realize a puerile pandemonium of dirt, discomfort, noise and general disorganization, the best place in the world is the household of a feeble-spirited mother of many sons where there is no controlling masculine influence.

Daughters, who are naturally and necessarily tied up to the mother's apron-string, suffer occasionally from too tight a strain; though certainly it is not the fault of the present day that girls are too closely fettered, too home-staying or subdued. Still, every now and then one comes across a matron who has crushed all individuality out of her family, and whose grown-up daughters are still children to her in moral go-carts and intellectual leading-strings. They may be the least attractive of their sex, but a mother of this kind has one fixed delusion respecting them—namely, that the world is full of wolves eager to devour her lambs, and that they are only safe when close to the maternal apron and browsing within an inch of the tether stake. These are the girls who become hopeless old maids. Men have an instinctive dread of the maternal apron-string. They do not want to marry a mother as well as a wife, and to live under a double dominion and a reduplicated opposition.

It is all very well to say that a girl so brought up is broken in already, and therefore more likely to make a good wife than many others, seeing that it is only a transfer of obedience. That may do for slaves who cannot be other than slaves whoever is the master; but it does not do for women who, seeing their friends freer than themselves, reflect with grief and longing that, had fate so ordered it, they might have been free too. The chances here, as with the mothers' boys, are, that the girl kept too close to the apron-string during her spinsterhood goes all abroad so soon as she gets on the free ground of matrimony, and lets her liberty run into license. Or she keeps her old allegiance to her mother intact, and her husband is never more than the younger branch at best. Most likely he is a usurper, whom it is her duty to disobey in favour of the rightful ruler when they chance to come into collision.

If women had their will, all national enterprise would be at an end. There would be no Arctic Expeditions, no Alpine Clubs, no dangerous experiments in science, no firearms at home, no volunteering—in their own family at least. All the danger would be done by the husbands and brothers and sons of other women, but each would guard her own. For women cannot go beyond the individual; and the loss of one of their own, by misadventure, weighs more with them than the necessity of keeping up the courage and hardihood of the nation. Nor do they see the difference between care and coddling, refinement and effeminacy; consequently, men are obliged to resist their influence, and many cut the apron-string altogether, because delicate fingers will tie the knots too tight. They do not remember that the influence to which men yield as a voluntary act of their own grace is a very different thing from obedience to the open denial, the undisguised interference and restraint, which some women like to show. Men respect the higher standard of morality kept up by women; they obey the major and the minor laws of refinement which are framed for home life and for society; and they confess that, without woman's influence, they would soon degenerate into mere savages and be no better than so many Choctaws before a generation was over; but they do not like being

pulled up short, especially in public, and hounded into the safe sheepfold for all the world to see them run. And they resent the endeavour. And the world resents it too, and feels that something is wrong when a woman shows that she has the whip hand, and that she can treat her husband like a petted child or bully him like a refractory one; that she has him tied to her apron-strings and tethered to the stake of her will. But there is more of this kind of thing in families than the world at large always knows of; and many a fine, stalwart fellow who holds his own among men, who is looked up to at his club and respected in his office for his courage, decision and self-reliance, sinks into mere poodledom at home, where his wife has somehow managed to get hold of the leading-strings, and has taught him that the only way to peace is by submission and obedience.

**FINE FEELINGS.**

There are people who pride themselves on the possession of what it pleases them to call fine feelings. Perhaps, if we were all diligent to call spades spades, these same fine feelings would come under a less euphemistic heading; but, as things are, we may as well adopt the softening gloze that is spread over the whole of our language, and call them by a pretty name with the rest. People who possess fine feelings are chiefly remarkable for the ease with which they take offence; it being indeed impossible, even for the most wary of their associates, to avoid giving umbrage in some shape, and generally when least intended and most innocently minded. Nothing satisfies them. No amount of attention, short of absolute devotion and giving them the place of honour everywhere, sets them at ease with themselves or keeps them in good-humour. If you ask them to your house, you must not dream of mixing them up with the rest. Though you have done them an honour in asking them at all, you must give them a marked position and bear them on your hands for the evening. They must be singled out from the herd and specially attended to; introduced to the nicest people; made a fuss with and taken care of; else they are offended, and feel they have been slighted—their sensitiveness or fine feelings being a kind of Chat Moss which will swallow up any quantity of petits soins that may be thrown in, and yet never be filled. If they are your intimate friends, you have to ask them on every occasion on which you receive. They make it a grievance if they hear that you have had even a dinner party without inviting them, though your space is limited and you had them at your last gathering. Still, if it comes to their ears that you have had friends and did not include them, they will come down on you to a dead certainty if they are of the franker kind, and ask you seriously, perhaps pathetically, how they have offended you? If they are of the sullen sort they will meet you coldly, or pass you by without seeing you; and will either drift into a permanent estrangement or come round after a time, according to the degree of acidity in their blood and the amount of tenacity in their character. They have lost their friends many times for no worse offence than this.

They are as punctilious too, as they are exacting. They demand visit for visit, invitation for invitation, letter for letter. Though you may be overwhelmed with serious work, while they have no weightier burden strapped to their shoulders than their social duties and social fineries, yet you must render point for point with them, keeping an exact tally with not a notch too many on their side, if you want to retain their acquaintance at all. And they must be always invited specially and individually, even to your open days; else they will not come at all; and their fine feelings will be hurt. They suffer no liberties to be taken with them and they take none with others; counting all frock-coat friendliness as

taking liberties, and holding themselves refined and you coarse if you think that manners sans façon are pleasanter than those which put themselves eternally into stays and stiff buckram, and are never in more undress than a Court suit. They will not go into your house to wait for you, however intimate they may be; and they would resent it as an intrusion, perhaps an impertinence, if you went into theirs in their absence. If you are at luncheon when they call, they stiffly leave their cards and turn away; though you have the heartiest, jolliest manner of housekeeping going, and keep a kind of open house for luncheon casuals. They do not understand heartiness or a jolly manner of housekeeping; open houses are not in their line and they will not be luncheon casuals; so they turn away grimly, and if you want to see them you have to send your servant panting down the street after them, when, their dignity being satisfied, their sensitiveness smoothed down and their fine feelings reassured, they will graciously turn back and do what they might have done at first without all this fuss and fume.

When people who possess fine feelings are poor, their sensitiveness is indeed a cross both for themselves and their friends to bear. If you try to show them a kindness or do them a service, they fly out at you for patronizing them, and say you humiliate them by treating them as paupers. You may do to your rich acquaintances a hundred things which you dare not attempt with your poor friends cursed with fine feelings; and little offices of kindness, which pass as current coin through society, are construed into insults with them. Difficult to handle in every phase, they are in none more dangerous to meddle with than when poor, though they are as bad if they have become successful after a period of struggle. Then your attention to them is time-serving, bowing to the rising sun, worshipping the golden calf, &c. Else why did you not seek them out when they were poor? Why were you not cap in hand when they went bare-headed? Why have you waited until they were successful before you recognized their value?

It is funny to hear how bitter these sensitive folks are when they have come out into the sunlight of success after the dark passage of poverty; as if it had been possible to dig them out of their obscurity when their name was still to make—as if the world could recognize its prophets before they had spoken. But this admission into the penetralia after success is a very delicate point with people of fine feelings, supposing always the previous struggle to have been hard; and even if there has been no struggle to speak of, then there are doubts and misgivings as to whether they are liked for themselves or not, and morbid speculations on the stability and absolute value of the position they hold and the attentions they receive, and endless surmises of what would be the result if they lost their fame or wealth or political power or social standing—or whatever may be the hook whereon their success hangs, and their fine feelings are impaled. The act of wisdom most impossible to be performed by these self-torturers is the philosophic acceptance of life as it is and of things as they fall naturally to their share.

Women remarkable for fine feelings are also remarkable for that uneasy distrust, that insatiable craving which continually requires reassuring and allaying. As wives or lovers they never take a man's love, once expressed and loyally acted on, as a certainty, unless constantly repeated; hence they are always pouting or bemoaning their loveless condition, getting up pathetic scenes of tender accusation or sorrowful acceptance of coolness and desertion, which at the first may have a certain charm to a man because flattering to his vanity, but which pall on him after a short time, and end by annoying and alienating him; thus bringing about the very catastrophe which was deprecated before it existed.

Another characteristic with women of fine feelings is their inability to bear the gentlest remonstrance, the most shadowy fault-finding. A rebuke of any gravity throws them into hysterics on the spot; but even a request to do what they have not been in the habit of doing, or to abstain from doing that which they have used themselves to do, is more than they can endure with dry-eyed equanimity. You have to live with them in the fool's paradise of perfectness, or you are made to feel yourself an unmitigated brute. You have before you the two alternatives of suffering many things which are disagreeable and which might easily be remedied, or of having your wife sobbing in her own room and going about the house with red eyes and an expression of exasperating patience under ill-treatment, far worse to bear than the most passionate retaliation. Indeed women may be divided broadly into those who cry and those who retort when they are found fault with; which, with a side section of those wooden women who 'don't care,' leaves a very small percentage indeed of those who can accept a rebuke good-temperedly, and simply try to amend a failing or break off an unpleasant habit, without parade of submission and sweet Griseldadom unjustly chastised, but kissing the rod with aggravating meekness.

For there are women who can make their meekness a more potent weapon of offence than any passion or violence could give. They do not cry, neither do they complain, but they exaggerate their submission till you are driven half mad under the slow torture they inflict. They look at you so humbly; they speak to you in so subdued a voice, when they speak to you at all, which is rarely and never unless first addressed; they avoid you so pointedly, hurrying away if you are going to meet them about the house, on the pretext of being hateful to your sight and doing you a service by ridding you of their presence; they are so ostentatiously careful that the thing of which you mildly complained under some circumstances shall never happen again under any circumstances, that you are forced at last out of your entrenchments, and obliged to come to an explanation. You ask them what is amiss? or, what do they mean by their absurd conduct? and they answer you 'Nothing,' with an injured air or affected surprise at your query. What have they done that you should speak to them so harshly? They are sure they have done all they could to please you, and they do not know what right you have to be vexed with them

again. They have kept out of your way and not said a word to annoy you; they have only tried to obey you and to do as you ordered, and yet you are not satisfied! What can they do to please you? and why is it that they never can please you whatever they do? You get no nearer your end by this kind of thing; and the only way to bring your Griselda to reason is by having a row; when she will cry bitterly, but finally end by kissing and making up. You have to go through the process. Nothing else, save a sudden disaster or an unexpected pleasure of large dimensions, will save you from it; but as we cannot always command earthquakes nor godsend, and as the first are dangerous and the last costly, the short and easy method remaining is to have a decisive 'understanding,' which means a scene and a domestic tempest with smooth sailing till the next time.

Sometimes fine feelings are hurt by no greater barbarity than that which is contained in a joke. People with fine feelings are seldom able to take a joke; and you will hear them relating, with an injured accent and as a serious accusation, the merest bit of nonsense you flung off at random, with no more intention of wounding them than had the merchant the intention of putting out the Efreet's eye when he flung his date-stones in the desert. As you cannot deny what you have said, they have the whip-hand of you for the moment; and all you can hope for is that the friend to whom they detail their grievance will see through them and it, and understand the joke if they cannot. Then there are fine feelings which express themselves in exceeding irritation at moral and intellectual differences of opinion—fine feelings bound up in questions of faith and soundness of doctrine, having taken certain moral and theological views under their especial patronage and holding all diversity of judgment therefrom a personal offence. The people thus afflicted are exceedingly uncomfortable folks to deal with, and manage to make every one else uncomfortable too. You hurt their feelings so continually and so unconsciously, that you might as well be living in a region of steel-traps and spring-guns, and set to walk blindfold among pitfalls and water-holes. You fling your date-stone here too, quite carelessly and thinking no evil, and up starts the Efreet who swears you have injured him intentionally. You express an opinion without attaching any particular importance to it, but you hurt the fine feelings which oppose it, and unless you wish to have a quarrel you must retract or apologize. As the worst temper always carries the day, and as fine feelings are only bad tempers under another name, you very probably do apologize; and so the matter ends.

Other people show their fineness of feeling by their impatience of pain and the tremendous grievance they think it that they should suffer as others—they say, so much more than others. These are the people who are great on the theory of nervous differences, and who maintain that their cowardice and impatience of suffering means an organization like an Æolian harp for sensibility. The oddest part of the business is the sublime contempt which these sensitives have for other persons' patience and endurance, and how much more refined and touching they think their own puerile



sensibility. But this is a characteristic of humanity all through; the masquerading of evil under the name of good being one of the saddest facts of an imperfect nature and a confused system of morals. If all things showed their faces without disguise, we should have fine feelings placed in a different category from that in which they stand at this moment, and the world would be the richer by just so much addition of truth.

**SPHINXES.**

There are people to whom mystery is the very breath of life and the main element of their existence. Without it they are insignificant nobodies; by its aid they are magnified into vague and perhaps awful potentialities. They are the people who take the Sphinx for their model, and like her, speak darkly and in parables; making secrets of every-day matters which would be patent to the whole world in their simplicity, but which, by the magic of enigmatic handling, become riddles that the curious would give their lives to unravel.

Nothing with these people is confessed and above board, and nothing is shown openly so that you may look at it all round and judge for yourself what it is like and what it is worth. The utmost they do is to uncover just a corner of something they keep back in the bulk, tantalizing you with glimpses that bewilder and mislead; or they will dangle before you the end of a clue which they want you to take up and follow, making you believe that you will be guided thereby into the very heart of a mystery, and that you will find a treasure hidden in the centre of the maze which will abundantly repay you for the trouble of hunting it out. Nine times out of ten you will find nothing but a scarecrow of no more value than the rags of which it is composed—if even you find that. They are the people who repeat to you the most trivial things you may have said, and who remind you of the most unimportant things you may have done, years ago, all of which you have totally forgotten; but they will speak of them in a mysterious manner, as if they had been matters of vital meaning at the time—things which would open, if followed up, a page in your private history that it were better should be forgotten. As it is a question of memory, you cannot deny point-blank what they affirm; and as we all have pages of private history which we would rather not hear read aloud at the market-cross, you are obliged to accept their highly suggestive recollections with a queer feeling of helplessness and being somehow in their power—not knowing how much they are really acquainted with your secret affairs, nor whether the signal they have flashed before your eyes is a feint or a revelation.

Of the same sort, with a difference, are those who are always going to tell you something some day—people burdened with a perennial mystery which never sees the light. You are for ever tormented with these folks' possibilities of knowledge. You turn over in your own mind every circumstance that you think they could have got hold of; you cunningly subject all your common friends to crafty cross-examination; you go, link by link, through the whole chain connecting you with them; but you can find nothing that leads to the mere outskirts of the mystery. You can make nothing of it; and your sphinx goes

on to the end promising some day to tell you something which dies with him untold. Your only consolation is the inner conviction that there was nothing to tell after all.

Then there are sphinxes of a more personal kind—people who keep their affairs a profound secret from every one, who wash all their dirty linen scrupulously at home and double-lock the door of the cupboard where the family skeleton lives. They are dungeons of silence, unfathomable abysses of reserve. You never know more of them, mind nor estate, than what you can learn from the merest outside of things. Look back, and you cannot recollect that you have ever heard them speak of their family or of their early days; and you are not acquainted with a living soul with whom they are connected. You may visit them for years without knowing that such and such a friend is their cousin, or maybe their sister. If they are unmarried men, they have no address save at their club; and neither you nor their most intimate friends have an idea where they sleep. For all you know to the contrary they may be married, with a fine flourishing family snugly stowed away in some suburban villa, where perhaps they live under another name, or with the omission or addition of a title that effectually masks their real individuality. If this is their special manifestation of sphinxhood, they take as many precautions against being identified as a savage when out on a scouting expedition. They obliterate all traces of themselves so soon as they leave their office in the City, and take it as a terrible misfortune if the truth is ever discovered; though there is nothing disgraceful in their circumstances, and their wives and children are healthy and presentable.

Most of us have been startled by the sudden discovery, in our own circle of friends, of the wife and children of some member of our society hitherto supposed to be a bachelor and unshackled. All the time that we have been joking him on his celibacy and introducing him to various young ladies likely to make good wives if properly taught, he has been living in the holy estate a little way out of town, where he is at last stumbled on by some Œdipus who tells the secret to all the world and blows the mystery to the winds. We may be very sure that the officious Œdipus in question gets no thanks for his pains, and that the sphinx he has unmasked would rather have gone on living in congenial secrecy with his unacknowledged family in that remote suburban villa, than be forced into publicity and recognition. Leading two lives and personating two men—the one as imagined by his friends, the other as known to his belongings—was a kind of existence he liked infinitely better than the commonplace respectability of being *en évidence* throughout.

With certain sphinxes, no one but the officials concerned ever knows what they have done, where they have served, what laurels they have gained. It comes out quite by accident that they were in the Crimea, where, like Jack Poyntz in School, they were heroes in their own way, though they don't talk about it; or that they performed prodigies of valour in the Indian Mutiny and obtained the Victoria Cross, which they

never wear. This kind has at least the merit of being unboastful; keeping their virtues hidden like the temple which the real sphinx held between her paws, and to which only those had access who knew the secret of the way. But though it is hateful to hear a man blowing his own trumpet in season and out of season, yet it is pleasant to know the good deeds of one's neighbours, and to have the power of admiring what is worthy of admiration. Besides, modesty and mystery are not the same things; and there is a mean to be found between the secrecy of a sphinx making riddles of commonplace matters, and the cackle of a hen when she has laid an egg for the family breakfast.

The monetary or financial sphinx is one of the oddest of the whole tribe and one of the most mysterious. There are people who live on notoriously small incomes—such as the widows, say, of naval or military men, whose pensions are printed in blue-books and of whose yearly receipts the world can take exact cognizance—yet who dress in velvet and satin, perpetually go about in cabs and hired carriages, and are never without money to spend, though always complaining of poverty. How these financial sphinxes manage surpasses the understanding of every one; and by what royal road they arrive at the power of making two do the work of four is hidden from the ordinary believers in Cocker. You know their ostensible income; indeed, they themselves put it at so much; but they keep up a magnificent appearance on a less sum than that on which you would go shabby and dilapidated. When you ask them how it is done, they answer, 'by management.' Anything can be done by management, they say, by those who have the gift; which you feel to be an utterance of the sphinx—a dark saying the key to which has not yet been forged.

You calculate to the best of your ability, and you know that you are sound in your arithmetic; but, do what you will, you can never come to the rule by which five hundred a year can be made to compass the expenditure of a thousand. If you whisper secret supplies, concealed resources, your sphinx will not so much as wink her eyelid. How she contrives to make her ostensible five hundred do the work of a thousand—how she gets velvet and satin for the value of cotton and stuff, and how, though always complaining of poverty, she keeps unfailingly flush of cash—how all this is done is her secret, and she holds it sacred. And you may be quite sure of one thing—it is a secret she will never share with you nor any one else.

The rapidly-working *littérateur* is another sphinx worth studying as a curiosity—we might say, indeed, a living miracle. There he stands, a jovial, self-indulgent, enjoying man, out in society every night in the week; by no means abstinent from champagne, and as little given to early rising as he is to consumption of the midnight oil. But he gets through a mass of work which would be respectable in a mere copyist, and which is little less than miraculous in an original producer. How he thinks, when he finds time to make up his plots, to work out his characters, even to correct his proofs, are riddles

unanswerable by all his friends. Taking the mere mechanical act alone, he must write faster than any living man has ever been known to write, to get through all that goes under his name. And when is it done? Literary sphinxes of this kind go about unchallenged; indeed, they are very much about, and to be beheld everywhere; and one looks at them with respect, not knowing of what material they are made, nor of what mysterious gifts they are the possessors. Novels, plays, essays, poems, come pouring forth in never slackening supply. The railway stations and all hoardings are made gorgeous by the announcement of their feats set out in red and blue and yellow. No sooner has one blaze of triumph burnt itself out than another blaze of triumph flares up; and nothing but death or a rich inheritance seems likely to stop their mysterious fecundity. How is it done? That is the secret of the literary sphinx, to which the admiring and amazed brotherhood is anxiously seeking some clue; but up to the present hour it has been kept jealously guarded and no solution has been arrived at.

There is another form of the literary sphinx in the Nobodies and Anons who speak from out the darkness and let no man see whence the voice proceeds. They are generally tracked to their lair sooner or later, and the sphinx's head turns out to be only a pasteboard mask behind which some well-known Apuleian hid himself for a while, working much amazement among the wondering crowd while the clasps held good, but losing something of that fervid worship when the reality became known. Others, again, of these Anons have, like Junius, kept their true abode hidden and their name a mystery still, though there be some who swear they have traced the footsteps and know exactly where the sphinx lives, and what is the name upon his frontlet, and of what race and complexion he is without his mask. It may be so. But as every discoverer has a track of his own, and as each swears that his sphinx is the real one and no other, the choice among so many becomes a service of difficulty; and perhaps the wisest thing to do is to suspend judgment until the literary sphinx of the day chooses to reveal himself by the prosaic means of a title-page, with his name as author printed thereon and his place of abode jotted down at the foot of the preface.

**FLIRTING.**

There are certain things which can never be accurately described—things so shadowy, so fitful, so dependent on the mood of the moment, both in the audience and the actor, that analysis and representation are equally at fault. And flirting is one of them. What is flirting? Who can define or determine? It is more serious than talking nonsense and not so serious as making love; it is not chaff and it is not feeling; it means something more than indifference and yet something less than affection; it binds no one; it commits no one though it raises expectations in the individual and sets society on the look-out for results; it is a plaything in the hands of the experienced but a deadly weapon against the breast of the unwary; and it is a thing so vague, so protean, that the most accurate measurer of moral values would be puzzled to say where it exactly ends and where serious intentions begin.

But again we ask: What is flirting? What constitutes its essence? What makes the difference between it and chaff on the one hand, and it and love-making on the other? Has it a cumulative power, and, according to the old saying of many a pickle making a mickle, does a long series of small flirtings make up a concrete whole of love? or is it like an unmortared heap of bricks, potential utilities if conditions were changed, but valueless as things are? The man who would be able to reduce flirting to a definite science, who could analyze its elements and codify its laws, would be doing infinite service to his generation; but we fear that this is about as difficult as finding the pot of gold under the end of a rainbow, or catching small birds with a pinch of salt.

Every one has his or her ideas of what constitutes flirting; consequently every one judges of that pleasant exercise according to individual temperament and experience. Faded flowers, who see impropriety in everything they are no longer able to enjoy, say with more or less severity that Henry and Angelina are flirting if they are laughing while whispering together in an alcove, probably the most innocent nonsense in the world; but the fact that they are enjoying themselves in their own way, albeit a silly one, is enough for the faded flower to think they are after mischief, flirting being to her mind about the worst bit of mischief that a fallen humanity can perpetrate. The watchful mother, intent on chances, says that dancing together oftener than is necessary for good breeding and just the amount of attention demanded by circumstances, is flirting; timid girls newly out, and not yet used to the odd ways of men, think they are being flirted with outrageously if their partner fires off the meekest little compliment at them, or looks at them more tenderly than he would look at a cabbage; but bolder spirits of both sexes think nothing worthy of the name which does not include a few questionable

familiarities, and an equivoke or two, more or less risky. With some, flirting is nothing but the passing fun of the moment; with others, it is the first lesson of the great unopened book and means the beginning of the end; with some, it is not even angling with intent; with others, it is deep-sea fishing with a broad, boldly-made net, and taking all fish that come in as good for sport if not for food.

Flirts are of many kinds as well as of all degrees. There are quiet flirts and demonstrative flirts; flirts of the subtle sort whose practice is made by the eyes alone, by the manner, by the tender little sigh, by the bend of the head and the wave of the hand, to give pathos and point to the otherwise harmless word; and flirts of the open and rampant kind, who go up quite boldly towards the point, but who never reach it, taking care to draw back in time before they fairly cross the border. This is the kind which, as the flirt male, does incalculable damage to the poor little fluttering dove to whom it is as a bird of prey, handsome, bold, cruel; but this is the kind which has unlimited success, using as it does that immense moral leverage we call 'tantalizing'—for ever rousing hopes and exciting expectations, and luring a woman on as an ignis fatuus lures us on across the marsh, in the vain belief that it will bring us to our haven at last.

Akin to this kind are those male flirts who are great in the way in which they manage to insinuate things without committing themselves to positive statements. They generally contrive to give the impression of some mysterious hindrance by which they are held back from full and frank confession. They hint at fatal bonds, at unfortunate attachments, at a past that has burnt them up or withered them up, at any rate that has prevented their future from blossoming in the direction in which they would fain have had it blossom and bear fruit. They sketch out vaguely the outlines of some thrilling romance; a few, of the Byronic breed, add the suspicion of some dark and melancholy crime as a further romantic charm and personal obstacle; and when they have got the girl's pity, and the love that is akin to pity, then they cool down scientifically, never creating any scandal, never making any rupture, never coming to a moment when awkward explanations can be asked, but cooling nevertheless, till the thing drops of its own accord and dies out from inanition; when they are free to carry their sorrows and their mysteries elsewhere. Some men spend their lives in this kind of thing, and find their pleasure in making all the women they know madly or sentimentally in love with them; and if by chance any poor moth who has burned her wings makes too loud an outcry, the tables are turned against her dexterously, and she is held up to public pity—contempt would be a better word—as one who has suffered herself to love too well and by no means wisely, and who has run after a Lothario by no means inclined to let himself be caught.

Then there are certain men who flirt only with married women, and others who flirt only with girls; and the two pastimes are as different as tropical sunlight and northern

moonshine. And there are some who are 'brothers,' and some who are 'fathers' to their young friends—suspicious fathers on the whole, not unlike Little Red Ridinghood's grandmother the wolf, with perilously bright eyes, and not a little danger to Red Ridinghood in the relationship, how delightful soever it may be to the wolf. Some are content with cousinship only—which however breaks down quite sufficient fences; and some are 'dearest friends,' no more, and find that an exceedingly useful centre from which to work onward and outward. For, if any peg will do on which to hang a discourse, so will any relationship or adoption serve the ends of flirting, if it be so willed.

But what is flirting? Is sitting away in corners, talking in low voices and looking personally affronted if any unlucky outsider comes within earshot, flirting? Not necessarily. It is just possible that Henry may be telling Angelina all about his admiration for her sister Grace; or Angelina may be confessing to Henry what Charley said to her last night;—which makes her lower her eyes as she is doing now, and play with the fringe of her fan so nervously. May be, if not likely. So that sitting away in corners and whispering together is not necessarily flirting, though it may look like it. Is dancing all the 'round' dances together? This goes for decided flirting in the code of the ball-room. But if the two keep well together? If they are really fond of dancing, as one of the fine arts combining science and enjoyment, they would dance with each other all night, though outside the 'marble halls' they might be deadly enemies—Montagues and Capulets, with no echo of Romeo and Juliet to soften their mutual dislike. So that not even dancing together oftener than is absolutely necessary is unmistakeable evidence, any more than is sitting away in corners, seeing that equal skill and keeping well in step are reasons enough for perpetual partnership, making all idea of flirtation unnecessary. In fact, there is no outward sign nor symbol of flirting which may not be mistaken and turned round, because flirting is so entirely in the intention and not in the mere formula, that it becomes a kind of phantasm, a Proteus, impossible to seize or to depict with accuracy.

One thing however, we can say—taking gifts and attentions, offered with evident design and accepted with tacit understanding, may be certainly held as constituting an important element of flirting. But this is flirting on the woman's side. And here you are being continually taken in. Your flirt of the cunningly simple kind, who smiles so sweetly and seems so flatteringly glad to see you when you come, who takes all your presents and acted expressions of love with the most bewitching gratitude and effusion, even she, so simple as she seems to be, slips the thread and will not be caught if she does not wish to be caught. At the decisive moment when you think you have secured her, she makes a bound and is away; then turns round, looks you in the face, and with many a tear and pretty asseveration declares that she never understood you to mean what you say you have meant all along; and that you are cruel to dispel her dream of a pleasant and harmless friendship, and very wicked indeed because you press her for a decision.



Yes; you are cruel, because you have believed her honest; cruel, because you did not see through the veil of flattery and insincerity in which she clothed her selfishness; cruel, because she was false. This is the flirt's logic when brought to book, and forced to confess that her pretended love was only flirting, and that she led you on to your destruction simply because it pleased her vanity to make you her victim.

Then there are flirts of the open and rollicking kind, who let you go far, very far indeed, when suddenly they pull up and assume an offended air as if you had wilfully transgressed known and absolute boundaries—girls and women who lead you on, all in the way of good fellowship, to knock you over when you have got just far enough to lose your balance. That is their form of the art. They like to see how far they can make a man forget himself, and how much stronger their own delusive enticements are than prudence, experience and common-sense. And there are flirts of the artful and 'still waters' kind, something like the male flirts spoken of just now; sentimental little pussies—perhaps pretty young wives with uncomfortable husbands, whose griefs have by no means soured nor scorched, but just mellowed and refined, them. Or they may be of the sisterly class; creatures so very frank, so very sisterly and confiding and unsuspecting of evil, that really you scarcely know how to deal with them at all. And there are flirts of the scientific kind; women who have studied the art thoroughly; and who are adepts in the use of every weapon known—using each according to circumstances and the nature of the victim, and using each with deadly precision. From such may a kind Providence deliver us! As the tender mercies of the wicked, so are the scientific flirts—the women and the men who play at bowls with human hearts, for the stakes of a whole life's happiness on the one side and a few weeks of gratified vanity on the other.

It used to be an old schoolboy maxim that no real gentleman could be refused by a lady, because no real gentleman could presume beyond his line of encouragement. *À fortiori*, no lady would or could give more encouragement than she meant. What are we to say then of our flirts if this maxim be true? Are they really 'no gentlemen' and 'no ladies,' according to the famous formula of the kitchen? Perhaps it would be said so if gentlehood meant now, as it meant centuries ago, the real worth and virtue of humanity. For flirting with intent is a cruel, false, heartless amusement; and time was when cruelty and falsehood were essentially sins which vitiated all claims to gentlehood. And yet the world would be very dull without that innocent kind of nonsense which often goes by the name of flirting—that pleasant something which is more than mere acquaintanceship and less than formal loverhood—that bright and animated intercourse which makes the hours pass so easily, yet which leaves no bitter pang of self-reproach—that indefinite and undefinable interest by which the one man or the one woman becomes a kind of

microcosm for the time, the epitome of all that is pleasant and of all that is lovely. The only caution to be observed is:—Do not go too far.

**SCRAMBLERS.**

There are people who are never what Northern housewives call 'straight'—people who seem to have been born in a scramble, who live in a scramble, and who, when their time comes, will die in a scramble, just able to scrawl their signature to a will that ought to have been made years ago, and that does not embody their real intentions now. Emphatically the Unready, they are never prepared for anything, whether expected or unexpected; they make no plans more stable than good intentions; and they neither calculate nor foresee. Everything with them is hurry and confusion; not because they have more to do than other people, but because they do it more loosely and less methodically—because they have not learnt the art of dovetailing nor the mystery of packing. Consequently half their pleasures and more than half their duties slip through their fingers for want of the knack of compact holding; and their lives are passed in trying to pick up what they have let drop and in frantic endeavours to remedy their mistakes. For scramblers are always making mistakes and going through an endless round of forgetting. They never remember their engagements, but accept in the blindest and frankest way imaginable two or more invitations for the same day and hour, and assure you quite seriously when, taught by experience, you push them hard and probe them deep, that they have no engagement whatever on hand and are certain not to fail you. In an evil hour you trust to them. When the day comes they suddenly wake to the fact that they had accepted Mrs. So-and-So's invitation before yours; and all you get for your empty place and your careful arrangements ruthlessly upset, is a hurried note of apology which comes perhaps in the middle of dinner, perhaps sometime next day, when too late to be of use.

If they forget their own engagements they also ignore yours, no matter how distinctly you may have tabulated them; and are sure to come rattling to your house on the day when you said emphatically you were engaged and could not see them. If you keep to your programme and refuse to admit them, more likely than not you affront them. Engagements being in their eyes moveable feasts, which it does not in the least degree signify whether they keep on the date set down or not, they cannot understand your rigidity of purpose; and were it not that as a tribe they are good-natured, and too fluid to hold even annoyance for any length of time, you would in all probability have a quarrel fastened on you because your scrambling friends chose to make a calendar for themselves and to insist on your setting your diary by it.

As they ignore your appointed hours, so do they forget your street and number. They always stick to your first card, though you may have moved many times since it was

printed, duly apprizing them of each change as it occurred. That does not help you, for they never note the changes of their friends' addresses, but keep loyally to the first. It all comes to the same in the end, they say, and the postman is cleverer than they. But they do not often trouble their friends with letters on their own account, for they have a speciality for not answering such as are written to them. When they do by chance answer them, they never reply to the questions asked nor give the news demanded. They do not even reply to invitations like other people, but leave you to infer from their silence the acceptance or rejection they are meditating. When they in their turn invite you, they generally puzzle you by mismatching the day of the week with the date of the month, leaving you tormented with doubt which you are to go by; and they forget to give you the hour. Besides this, they write an illegible hand; and they are famous for the blots they make and the Queen's heads they omit.

A scrambling wife is no light cross to a man who values order and regularity as part of his home life. She may be, and probably is, the best-tempered creature in the world—a peevish scrambler would be too unendurable—but a fresh face, bright eyes and a merry laugh do not atone for never-ending disorder and discomfort. This kind of thing does not depend on income and is not to be remedied by riches. The households where my lady has nothing to do but let her maid keep her to the hours she herself has appointed are just as uncomfortable in their way as poorer establishments, if my lady is a scrambler, and cannot be taught method and the value of holding on by the forelock. Sometimes my lady gets herself into such an inextricable coil of promises and engagements, all crossing each other, that in despair she takes to her bed and gives herself out as ill, and so cuts what she cannot untie. People wonder at her sudden indisposition, looking as she did only yesterday in the bloom of health; and they wonder at her radiant reappearance in a day or two without a trace of even languor upon her. They do not know that her retirement was simply a version of the famous rope trick, and that, like the Brothers Davenport, she went into the dark to shake herself free of the cords with which she had suffered herself to be bound. It is a short and easy method certainly, but it has rather too much of the echo of 'Wolf' in it to bear frequent repetition.

In houses of a lower grade, where the lady is her own housekeeper, the habit of scrambling of course leads to far greater and more manifest confusion. The servants catch from the mistress the trick of overstaying time; and punctuality at last comes to mean an elastic margin, where fixed duties and their appointed times appear cometically at irregular intervals. The cook is late with dinner; the coachman begins to put-to a little after the hour he was ordered to be at the door; but they know that, however late they are, the chances are ten to one their mistress will not be ready for them, and that in her heart she will be grateful to them for the shelter their own unpunctuality affords her. This being so, they take their time and dawdle at their

pleasure; thus adding to the pressure which always comes at the end of the scrambler's day, when everything is thrown into a chaotic mass and nothing comes out straight or complete.

Did any one ever know a scrambling woman ready at the moment in her own house? That she should be punctual to any appointment out of her house is, of course, not to be thought of; but she makes an awkward thing of it sometimes at home. Her guests are often all assembled, and the dinner hour has struck, before she has torn off one gown and dragged on another. What she cannot tie she pins; and her pins are many and demonstrative. She wisps up her hair, not having left herself time to braid it; and the consequence is that before she has been half an hour in the room ends and tails are sure to stray playfully from their fastenings and come tumbling about her ears. Her jewels are mismatched, her colours ill-assorted, her belt is awry, her bouquet falling to pieces. She rushes into the drawing-room in her morning slippers, smiling and good-tempered, with a patch-work look about her—something forgotten in her attire that makes her whole appearance shaky and unfinished—fastening her last button or clasping on her first bracelet. She is full of regrets and excuses delivered in her joyous, buoyant manner, or in a voice so winning, an accent so coaxing, that you cannot be annoyed. Besides, you leave the annoyance to her husband, who is sure to have in reserve a pickle quite sufficiently strong for the inevitable rod, as the poor scrambler knows too well. All you can do is to accept her apologies with a good grace, and to carry away with you a vivid recollection of an awkward half-hour, a spoilt dinner, and a scrambling hostess all abroad and out of time, sweeping through the room very heated, very good-tempered, only half-dressed and chronically out of breath.

Scramblers can never learn the value of money, neither for themselves nor for others. They are famous for borrowing small sums which they forget to return; but, to do them justice, they are just as willing to lend what they never dream of asking for again. Long ago they caught hold of the fact that money is only a circulating medium, and they have added an extra speed to the circulation at which slower folk stand aghast. To be sure, the practical results of their theory are not very satisfactory, and the confusion between the possessive pronouns which distinguishes their financial catechism is apt to lead to unpleasant issues.

Scrambling women are especially notorious for the way in which they set themselves afloat without sufficient means to carry them on; finding themselves stranded in mid-career because they have made no calculations and have forgotten the rule of subtraction. They find themselves at a small Italian town, say, where the virtues of the British banking system are unknown, and where their letters of credit and circular notes are not worth more than the value of the paper they are written on. More than one British matron of respectable condition and weak arithmetic has found herself in such a

plight as this, with her black-eyed landlord perfectly civil and well-bred, but as firm as a rock in his resolution that the Signora shall not depart out of his custody till his little account is paid—a plight out of which she has to scramble the best way she can, with the loss perhaps of a little dignity and of more repute—at least in the locality where her solid scudi gave out and her precious paper could not be cashed. This is the same woman who offers an omnibus conductor a sovereign for a three-penny fare; who gives the village grocer a ten-pound note for a shilling's-worth of sugar; and who, when she comes up to London for a day's shopping, and has got her last parcel made up and ready to be put into her cab, finds she has not left herself half enough money to pay for it—with a shopman whose faith in human nature is by no means lively, and who only last week was bitten by a lady swindler of undeniable manners and appearance, and not very unlike herself. She has been known too, to go into a confectioner's and, after having made an excellent luncheon, to find to her dismay that she has left her purse in the pocket of her other dress at home, and that she has not six-pence about her. In fact there is not an equivocal position in which forgetfulness, want of method, want of foresight, and all the other characteristics which make up scrambling in the concrete, can place her, in which she has not been at some time or other. But no experience teaches her; the scrambler she was born, the scrambler she will die, and to the last will tumble through her life, all her ends flying and deprecating excuses on her lips.

Scramblers are notoriously great for making promises, and as notorious for not performing what they promise. Kindhearted as they are in general, and willing to do their friends a service—going out of their way indeed to proffer kindnesses quite beyond your expectations and the range of their duties towards you, and always undertaking works of supererogation; which works in fact lead to more than half their normal scramble—they forget the next hour the promise on which you have based your dearest hopes. Or, if they do not forget it, they find it is crowded out of time by a multitude of engagements and prior promises, of all of which they were innocently oblivious when they offered to do your business so frankly, and swore so confidently they would set about it now at once and get it out of hand without delay. The oath and the offer which you took to be as sure as the best chain-cable, you will find on trial to be only a rope of sand that could not bind so much as a bunch of tow together, still less hold the anchor of a life; and many a heart, sick with hope deferred and wrung with the disappointment which might have been so easily prevented, has been half broken before now from the anguish that has followed on the failure of the kindhearted scrambler to perform the promise voluntarily made, and the service earnestly pressed on a reluctant acceptor.

This is the tragic side of the scrambler's career, the shadow thrown by almost every one of the class. For all the minor delinquencies of hurry and unpunctuality in social affairs it is not difficult to find full and ample forgiveness; but when it comes to untrustworthiness in graver matters, then the scrambler becomes a scourge instead of

only an inconvenience. The only safe way of dealing with the class is to take them when we can get hold of them, and to accept them for what they are worth; but not to rely on them, and not to attempt any mortising of our own affairs with their promises. They are the froth and foam of society, pretty and pleasant enough in the sunlight as they splash and splutter about the rocks; but they are not the deep waters which bear the burden of our ships and by which the life of the world is maintained.

**FLATTERY.**

Nothing is so delightful as flattery. To hear and believe pleasant fictions about oneself is a temptation too seductive for weak mortals to resist, as the typical legends of all mythologies and the private histories of most individuals show; in consequence of which, home truths, to one used to ideal portraiture, come like draughts of 'bitter cup' to the dram-drinker. And flattery is dram-drinking; and yet not quite without good uses to balance its undeniable evil, if it be only exaggeration and not wholly falsehood; that is, if it assumes as a matter of course the presence of virtues potential to your character but not always active, and praises you for what you might be if you chose to live up to your best. Many a weak brother and weaker sister, and all children, can be heartened into goodness by a little dash of judicious praise or flattery where ponderous exhortation and grave reproof would fail; just as a heavily-laden horse can be coaxed up-hill when the whip and spur would lead to untimely jibbing. If, on the contrary, the flattery is of a kind that makes you believe yourself an exceptionally fine fellow when you are only 'mean trash'—a king of men when you are nothing better nor nobler than a moral nigger—making you satisfied with yourself when at your worst—then it is an unmitigated evil; for it then becomes dram-drinking of a very poisonous kind, which sooner or later does for your soul what unlimited blue ruin does for your body. But this is what we generally mean when we speak of flattery; and this is the kind which has such a deservedly bad name from moralists of all ages.

The flatteries of men to women, and those of women to men, are very different in kind and direction. Men flatter women for what they are—for their beauty, their grace, their sweetness, their charmingness in general; while a woman will flatter a man for what he does—for his speech in the House last night, of which she understands little; for his book, of which she understands less; or for his pleading, of which she understands nothing at all. Not that this signifies much on either side. The most unintellectual little woman in the world has brains enough to look up in your face sweetly, and breathe out something that sounds like 'beautiful—charming—so clever,' vaguely sketching the outline of a hymn of praise to which your own vanity supplies the versicles. For you must have an exceptionally strong head if you can rate the sketch at its real value and see for yourself how utterly meaningless it is.

You may be the most mystical poet of the day, suggesting to your acutest readers grave doubts as to your own power of comprehending yourself; or you may be the most subtle metaphysician, to follow whom in your labyrinth of reasoning requires perhaps the rarest order of brains to be met with; but you will nevertheless believe any narrow-



browed, small-headed woman who tells you in a low sweet voice, with a gentle uplifting of her eyes and a suggestive curve of her lip, that she has found you both intelligible and charming, and that she quite agrees with you and shares your every sentiment. If she further tells you that all her life long she has thought in exactly the same way but was wholly unable to express herself, and that you have now supplied her want and translated into words her vague ideas, and if she says this with a reverential kind of effusiveness, you are done for, so far as your critical power goes; and should some candid friend, whom she has not flattered, tell you with brutal frankness that your bewitching little flatterer has neither the brains nor the education to understand you, you will set him down as a slanderer, spiteful and malignant, and call his candour envy because he has not been so lucky as yourself.

The most subtle form of flattery is that which asks your advice with the pretence of needing it—your advice, particularly—yours above that of all other persons, as the wisest, best, most useful to be obtained. This too is a form that belongs rather to women in their relations with men than the converse; though sometimes men will pretend to want a woman's advice about their love affairs, and will perhaps make-believe to be guided by it. Not unfrequently, however, asking one woman's opinion and advice about another is a masked manner of love-making on its own account; though sometimes it may be done for flattery only, when there are reasons. Of course not all advice-asking is flattery; but when intended only to please and not meant to be genuine, it is perhaps one of the most potent instruments of the art to be met with.

But if seeking advice be the most subtle form of flattery, the most intoxicating is that which pretends to moral elevation or reform by your influence. The reformation of a rake is a work which no woman alive could be found to resist if the rake offered it to her as his last chance of salvation; and to lead a pretty sinner back to the ways of picturesque virtue by his own influence only is a temptation to self-reliance which no man could refuse—a flattery which not Diogenes nor Zeno himself could see through. The pretensions of any one else would be laughed at cruelly enough; but this is one of the things where personal experience and critical judgment never go in harness together—one of the manifestations of flattery which would overcome the calmest and bewilder the wisest.

Priests of all denominations are especially open to this kind of flattery; not only from pretty sinners who have gone openly out of the right line, but from quite comely and respectable maids and matrons who have lived blamelessly so far as the broad moral distinctions go, yet who have not lived the Awakened Life until roused thereunto by this peculiarly favoured minister. It is a tremendous trial of a man's discernment when such flattery is offered to him. How much of this pretended awakening is real? How much of this sudden spiritual insight is true, and not a mere phrasing, artfully adopted for

pleasantness only? These are the cases where we most want that famous spear of Ithuriel to help us to a right estimate, for they are beyond the power of any ordinary man to determine.

But if priests are subject to these delusions of flattery on the one hand, they know how to practise them on the other. Take away the flattery which, mingled with occasional rebuke, forms the great ministerial spur, and both Revivalism and Ritualism would flag like flowers without 'the gentle dews.' Scolded for their faults in dress, for their vanity, extravagance and other feminine vices, are not women also flattered as the favourites of heaven and of the Church? Are they not told that they are the lilies of the ecclesiastical garden? the divinely appointed missionaries for the preservation of virtue and godly truth in the world? without whom the coarser race of men would be given over to inconceivable spiritual evil, to infidelity and all immorality. We may be very sure of this, that if humanity, and especially feminine humanity, were not flattered as well as chastened, clerical influence would not last for a day.

There is one kind of flattery which is common to both men and women, and that is the expressed preference of sex. Thus, when men want to flatter women, they say how infinitely they prefer their society to that of their own sex; and women will say the same to men. Or, if they do not say it, they will act it. See a set of women congregated together without the light of a manly countenance among them. They may talk to each other certainly; and one or two will sit away together and discuss their private affairs with animation; but the great mass of them are only half vitalized while waiting the advent of the men to rouse them into life and the desire to please. No man who goes up first from the dinner-table, and earlier than he was expected, can fail to see the change which comes over those wearied, limp, indifferent-looking faces and figures so soon as he enters the room. He is like the prince whose kiss woke up the Sleeping Beauty and all her court; and can any one say that this is not flattery of the most delightful kind? To be the Pygmalion even for a moment, and for the weakest order of soul-giving, is about the greatest pleasure that a man can know, if he be susceptible to the finer kinds of flattery.

Some women indeed, not only show their preference for men, but openly confess it, and confess at the same time to a lofty contempt or abhorrence for the society of women. These are generally women who are, or have been, beauties; or who have literary and intellectual pretensions; or who despise babies and condemn housekeeping, and profess themselves unable to talk to other women because of their narrowness and stupidity. But for the most part they are women who, by their beauty or their position, have been used to receive extra attention from men; and thus their preference is not flattery so much as exigence. Women who have been in India, or wherever else they are in the minority in society, are of this kind; and nothing is more amazing to them when they

first come home than the attentions which a certain style of Englishwoman pays to men, instead of demanding and receiving attentions from them.

There are also those sweet, humble, caressing women who flatter you with every word and look, but whose flattery is nothing but a pretty dress put on for show and taken off when the show is done with. Anything serves for an occasion with these people. Why, the way in which certain unmarried women will caress a child before you is an implied flattery; and they know it. If only they would be careful to carry these pretty ante-nuptial ways into the home where nothing is to be gained by them but a humdrum husband's happiness! But too often the woman whose whole attitude was one of flattering devotion before her end was gained, gives up every shred of that which she had in such profusion, when she has attained her object, and lets the home go bare of that which was so beautiful and seductive in the ball-room and the flirting corner.

Some men however, want more home flattery to keep them tolerably happy and up to the mark than any woman with a soul to be saved by truth can give. Poets and artists are of this kind—men who literally live on praise, without which they droop and can do nothing. With them it is absolutely necessary that the people with whom they are associated should be of appreciative and sympathetic natures; but the burden comes heavy when they want, as they generally do, so much more than this. For, in truth, they want flattery in excess of sympathy; and if they do not get it they hold themselves as the victims of an unkind fate, and fill the world with the echo of their woes. This is nine-tenths of the cause why great geniuses are so often unhappy in married life. They demand more incessant flattery than can be kept up by one woman, unless she has not only an exceptional power of love but also an exceptional power of self-suppression. They think that by virtue of their genius they are entitled to a Benjamin's mess of devotion double that given to other men; and when they get only Judah's share, they cry out that they are ill-used, and make the world think them ill-used as well.

But though a little home flattery helps the home life immeasurably, and greases the creaking domestic wheels more than anything else can, a great deal is just the most pernicious thing that can be offered. The belief prevalent in some families that all the very small and commonplace members thereof are the world's wonders and greater than any one else—that no one is so clever as Harry, no one so pretty as Julia, that Amy's red hair is of a more brilliant gold than can be found elsewhere, and Edward's mathematical abilities about equal to Newton's—this belief, nourished and acted on, is sure to turn out an insufferable collection of prigs and self-conceited damsels who have to be brought down innumerable pegs before they find their own level. But we often see this; especially in country places where there is not much society to give a standard for comparative measurement; and we know that those fond parents and doting relations are blindly and diligently sowing seeds of bitterness for a future harvest of sorrow for

their darlings. These young people must be made to suffer if they are to be of any good whatever in the world; and finding their level, after the exalted position which they have been supposed to fill so long, and being pelted with the unsavoury missiles of truth in exchange for all the incense of flattery to which they have been used, will be suffering enough. But it has to be gone through; this being one of the penalties to which the unwisdom of love so often subjects its objects.

The flattery met with in society is not often very harmful save to coarse or specially simple natures. You must be either one or the other to be able to believe it. Lady Morgan was perhaps the most unblushing and excessive of the tribe of social flatterers; but that was her engine, the ladder by which she did a good part of her climbing. We must not confound with this kind of flattery the impulsive expression of praise or love which certain outspoken people indulge in to the last. You may as well try to dam up Niagara as to make some folks reticent of their thoughts and feelings. And when one of this kind sees anything that he or she likes, the praise has to come out, with superlatives if the creature be prone to exaggeration. But this is not flattery; it is merely a certain childlike expansiveness which lasts with some into quite old age. Unfortunately, very few understand this childlike expansiveness when they see it. Hence it subjects its possessor to misrepresentation and unfriendly jibes, so soon as his or her back is turned, and the explosion of exaggerated but perfectly sincere praise is discussed critically by the uninterested part of the audience.

## **The Girl of the Period and Other Social Essays Vol. II by Eliza Lynn Linton**

### **LA FEMME PASSÉE.**

Without doubt it is a time of trial to all women, more or less painful according to individual disposition, when they first begin to grow old and lose their good looks. Youth and beauty make up so much of their personal value, so much of their natural final cause, that when these are gone many feel as if their whole career were at an end, and as if nothing were left to them now that they are no longer young enough to be loved as girls are loved, or pretty enough to be admired as mature sirens are admired. For women of a certain position have so little wholesome occupation, and so little ambition for anything save indeed that miserable thing called 'getting on in society,' that they cannot change their way of life with advancing years. Hence they do not attempt to find interest in things outside themselves, and independent of the personal attractiveness which in youth constituted their whole pleasure of existence.

This is essentially the case with fashionable women, who have staked their all on appearance, and to whom good looks are of more account than noble deeds; and, accordingly, the struggle to remain young is a frantic one with them, and as degrading as it is frantic.

With the ideal woman of middle age—that pleasant She with her calm face and soft manner, who unites the charms of both epochs, retaining the ready responsiveness of youth while adding the wider sympathies of experience—with her there has been no such struggle to make herself an anachronism. Consequently she remains beautiful to the last—far more beautiful than all the pastes and washes in Madame Rachel's shop could make her. Sometimes, if rarely in these latter days, we meet her in society, where she carries with her an atmosphere of her own—an atmosphere of honest, wholesome truth and love, which makes every one who enters it better and purer for the time. All children and all young persons love her, because she understands and loves them. For she is essentially a mother—that is, a woman who can forget herself; who can give without asking to receive; and who, without losing any of the individualism which belongs to self-respect, can yet live for and in the lives of others, and find her best joy in the well-being of those about her. There is no exaggerated sacrifice in this; it is simply the fulfilment of woman's highest duty—the expression of that grand maternal instinct which need not necessarily include the fact of personal maternity, but which, with all women worthy of the name, must find utterance in some line of unselfish action.

The ideal woman of middle age understands the young because she has lived with them. If a mother, she has performed her maternal duties with cheerfulness and love. There

has been no giving up her nursery to the care of a hired servant who is expected to do for so many pounds a year things which the tremendous instinct of a mother's love could not find strength to do. When she had children, she attended to them in great part herself, and learnt all about their tempers, their maladies, and the best methods of management. As they grew up she was still the best friend they had—the Providence of their young lives who gave them both care and justice, both love and guidance. Such a manner of life has forced her to forget herself. When her child lay ill, perhaps dying, she had no heart and no time to think of her own appearance, and whether this dressing-gown was more becoming than that: and what did the doctor think of her with her hair pushed back from her face?—and what a fright she must have looked in the morning light after her sleepless night of watching! The world and all its petty pleasures and paltry pains faded away in the presence of the stern tragedy of the hour; and not the finest ball of the season seemed to be worth a thought compared to the all-absorbing question of whether her child slept after his draught and whether he ate his food with better appetite. And such a life, in spite of all its cares, has kept her young as well as unselfish; we should rather say, young because unselfish. As she comes into the room with her daughters, her kindly face unpolluted by paint, her dress picturesque or fashionable according to her taste, but decent in form and consistent in tone with her age, it is often remarked that she looks more like the sister than the mother of her girls. This is because she is in harmony with her age, and has not therefore put herself in rivalry with them; and harmony is the very keystone of beauty. Her hair is thickly streaked with white; the girlish firmness and transparency of her skin have gone; the pearly clearness of her eye is clouded; the slender grace of line is lost—but for all that she is beautiful, and she is intrinsically young. What she has lost in outside material charm—in that mere *beauté du diable* of youth—she has gained in character and expression; and by not attempting to simulate the attractiveness of a girl, she keeps what nature gave her—the attractiveness of middle age. And as every epoch has its own beauty—if women would but learn that truth—she is as beautiful now as a matron of fifty, because in harmony with her years, as she was when a maiden of sixteen.

This is the ideal woman of middle age, met with even yet at times in society—the woman whom all men respect; whom all women envy, and wonder how she does it; and whom all the young adore, and wish they had for an elder sister or an aunt. And the secret of it all lies in truth, in love, in purity, and in unselfishness.

Standing far apart from this sweet and wholesome idealization is *la femme passée* of to-day—the reality as we meet with it at balls and fêtes and afternoon At Homes, ever foremost in the mad chase after pleasure, for which alone she seems to think she has been sent into the world. Dressed in the extreme of youthful fashion; her thinning hair dyed and crimped and fired till it is more like red-brown tow than hair; her flaccid cheeks ruddled; her throat whitened; her bust displayed with unflinching generosity—as

if beauty is to be measured by cubic inches; her lustreless eyes blackened round the lids, to give the semblance of limpidity to the tarnished whites; perhaps the pupils dilated by belladonna; perhaps a false and fatal brilliancy for the moment given by opium, or by eau de cologne, of which she has a store in her carriage, and drinks as she passes from ball to ball; no kindly drapery of lace nor of gauze to conceal the breadth of her robust maturity, to soften the dreadful shadows of her leanness—there she stands, the wretched creature who will not consent to grow old, and who still affects to be a fresh coquettish girl when she is nothing but *la femme passée*—*la femme passée et ridicule* into the bargain.

There is not a folly for which even the thoughtlessness of youth is but a poor excuse into which she, in all the plenitude of her abundant experience, does not plunge. Wife and mother as she may be, she flirts and makes love as if an honourable issue were as open to her as to her young daughter; or as if she did not know to what end flirting and making love lead in all ages. If we watch the career of such a woman, we see how, by slow but very sure degrees, she is obliged to lower the standard of her adorers, and to take up at last with men of inferior social position, who are content to buy her patronage by their devotion. To the best men of her own class she can give nothing that they value; so she barter with snobs, who go into the transaction with their eyes open, and take the whole affair as a matter of exchange, and *quid pro quo* rigidly exacted. Or she does really dazzle some very young and low-born man who is weak as well as ambitious, and who thinks the fugitive regard of a middle-aged woman of high rank something to be proud of and boasted about. That she is as old as his own mother—at this moment selling tapes behind a village counter, or gathering up the eggs in a country farm—tells nothing against the association with him; and the woman who began her career of flirtation with the son of a duke ends it with the son of a shopkeeper, having between these two terms spanned all the several degrees of degradation which lie between giving and buying. She cannot help herself; for it is part of the insignia of her artificial youth to have the reputation of a love-affair, or the pretence of one, even if the reality be a mere delusion. When such a woman as this is one of the matrons, and consequently one of the leaders of society, what can we expect from the girls? What worse example could be given to the young? When we see her with her own daughters we feel instinctively that she is the most disastrous adviser they could have; and when in the company of girls or young married women not belonging to her, we doubt whether we ought not to warn their natural guardians against allowing such association, for all that her standing in society is undeniable, and not a door is shut against her.

What good in life does this kind of woman do? All her time is taken up, first in trying to make herself look twenty or thirty years younger than she is, and then in trying to make others believe the same. She has neither thought nor energy to spare from this, to her, far more important work than is feeding the hungry or nursing the sick, rescuing the

fallen or soothing the sorrowful. The final cause of her existence seems to be the impetus she has given to a certain branch of trade manufacture—unless we add to this, the corruption of society. For whom, but for her, are the 'little secrets' which are continually being advertised as woman's social salvation—regardless of grammar? The 'eaux noire, brun, et châtain, which dyes the hair any shade in one minute;' the 'kohl for the eyelids;' the 'blanc de perle,' and 'rouge de Lubin'—which does not wash off; the 'bleu pour les veines;' the 'rouge of eight shades,' and 'the sympathetic blush,' which are cynically offered for the use and adoption of our mothers and daughters, find their chief patroness in the femme passée who makes herself up—the middle-aged matron engaged in her frantic struggle against time, and obstinately refusing to grow old in spite of all that nature may say or do. Bad as the Girl of the Period is, this horrible travesty of her vices in the modern matron is even worse. Indeed, were it not for her, the girls would never have gone to such lengths as those to which they have gone; for elder women naturally have immense influence over younger ones, and if mothers were resolutely to set their faces against the follies of the day, daughters would and must give in. As it is, some go even ahead of the young, and, by example on the one hand and rivalry on the other, sow the curse of corruption broadcast where they were meant to have only a pure influence and to set a wise example. Were it not for those who still remain faithful—women who regard themselves as the trustees for humanity and virtue—the world would go to ruin forthwith; but so long as the five righteous are left we have hope and a certain amount of security for the future, when the present disgraceful madness of society shall have passed away.



**SPOILT WOMEN**

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

A man who has been spoilt by success and a gratified ambition, so that he thinks himself a small Alexander in his own way and able to conquer any obstacles which may present themselves, has a certain high-handed activity of will about him that does not interfere with his duties in life; he is not made fretful and impatient and exigent as a woman is—as if he alone of all mankind ought to be exempt from misfortunes and annoyances; as if his friends must never die, his youth never fade, his circumstances run always smooth, protected by the care of others from all untoward hitch; as if time and tide, which wait for no one else, are bound to him as humble servants dutifully observant of his wishes. The useful art of finding his level, which he learnt at school and in his youth generally, keeps him from any very weak manifestation of being spoilt; save indeed, when he has been spoilt by women at home, nursed up by an adoring wife and a large circle of wife's sisters almost as adoring, to all of whom his smallest wishes are religious obligations and his faintest virtues godly graces, and who vie with each other which of them shall wait upon him most servilely, flatter him most outrageously, coax and coddle him most entirely, and so do him the largest amount of spiritual damage, and unfit him most thoroughly for the worth and work of masculine life. A man subjected to this insidious injury is simply ruined so far as any real manliness of nature goes. He is made into that sickening creature, 'a sweet being,' as the women call him—a woman's man with æsthetic tastes and a turn for poetry; full of highflown sentiment and morbid sympathies; a man almost as much woman as man, who has no backbone of useful ambition in him, but who puts his whole life into love, and who becomes at last emphatically not worth his salt.

Bad as it is for men of the world to be kowtowed to by men, it is not so bad, because not so weakening, as the domestic idolatry which sometimes goes on when one man is the

centre of a large family of women, and the only object upon which the natural feminine instinct can expend itself. No greater damage can be done to a man than is done by this kind of domestic idolatry. But, in truth, the evil is too pleasant to be resisted; and there is scarcely a man so far master of himself as to withstand the subtle intoxication, the sweet and penetrating poison, of woman's tender flattery and loving submission. To a certain extent he holds it so entirely the right thing, because it is natural and instinctive, that it is difficult to draw the line and map out exactly the division between right and wrong, pleasantness and harmfulness, and where loving submission ends and debasing slavishness begins.

Spoilt women are spoilt mainly from a like cause: over-attention from men. A few certainly are to be found, as pampered daughters, with indulgent mammas and subservient aunts given up to ruining their young charges with the utmost despatch possible; but this is comparatively a rare form of the disease, and one which a little wholesome matrimonial discipline would soon cure. For it is seldom that a petted daughter becomes a spoilt wife—human affairs having that marvellous power of equation, that inevitable tendency to readjust the balance, which prevents the continuance of a like excess under different forms. Besides, a spoilt daughter generally makes such a supremely unpleasant wife that the husband has no inducement to continue the mistake, and therefore either lowers her tone by a judicious exhibition of snubbing, or, if she be aggressive as well as unpleasant, leaves her to fight with her shadows in the best way she can, glad for his own part to escape the strife she will not forego.

The spoilt woman is impatient of anything like rivalry. She never has a female friend—certainly not one of her own degree, and not one at all in the true sense of the word. Friendship presupposes equality; and a spoilt woman knows no equality. She has been so long accustomed to consider herself as lady-paramount that she cannot understand it if any one steps in to share her honours and divide her throne. To praise the beauty of any other woman, to find her charming, and to pay her the attention due to a charming woman, is to insult our spoilt darling, and to slight her past forgiveness. If there is only one good thing, it must be given to her—the first seat, the softest cushion, the most protected situation; and she looks for the best of all things as if naturally consecrated from her birth to the sunshine of life, and as if the 'cold shade' which may do for others were by no means the portion allotted to her.

It is almost impossible to make the spoilt woman understand the grace or the glory of sacrifice. By rare good fortune she may sometimes be found to possess an indestructible germ of conscience which sorrow and necessity can develop into active good; but only sometimes. The spoilt woman par excellence understands only her own value, only her own merits and the absolutism of her own requirements; and sacrifice, self-abnegation,

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

All that large part of the true woman's nature which expresses itself in serving is an unknown function to the spoilt woman. She must be waited on, but she cannot in her turn serve even the one she loves. She is the woman who calls her husband from one end of the room to the other to put down her cup, rather than reach out her arm and put it down for herself; who, however weary he may be, will bid him get up and ring the bell, though it is close to her own hand, and her longest walk during the day has been from the dining-room to the drawing-room. It is not that she cannot do these small offices for herself, but that she likes the feeling of being waited on; and it is not for love, and the amiable if weak pleasure of attracting the notice of the beloved, but it is for the vanity of being a little somebody for the moment, and of playing off the small regality involved in the procedure, that she claims his attention. She would not return that attention. Unlike the Eastern women, who wait on their lords hand and foot, and who place their highest honour in their lowliest service, the spoilt woman of Western life knows nothing of the natural grace of womanly serving for love, for grace, or for gratitude.

This kind of thing is peculiarly strong among the demi-monde of the higher class, and among women who are of the demi-monde by nature. The respect they cannot command by their virtues they demand in the simulation of manner; and perhaps no women are more tenacious of the outward forms of deference than those who have lost their claim to the vital reality. It is very striking to see the difference between the women of this type, the petites maîtresses who require the utmost attention and almost servility from man, and the noble dignity of service which the pure woman can afford to give—which she finds indeed, that it belongs to the very purity and nobleness of her womanhood to give. It is the old story of the ill-assured position which is afraid of its own weakness, and the security which can afford to descend—the rule holding good for other things besides mere social place.

Another characteristic of the spoilt woman is the changeableness and excitability of her temper. All suavity and gentleness and delightful gaiety and perfect manners when everything goes right, she startles you by her outburst of petulance when the first cross comes. If no man is a hero to his valet, neither is a spoilt woman a heroine to her maid; and the lady who has just been the charm of the drawing-room, upstairs in her boudoir makes her maid go through spiritual exercises to which walking among burning ploughshares is easy-going. A length of lace unstarched, a ribbon unsewed, a flower set awry, anything that crumples one of the myriad rose-leaves on which she lies, and the spoilt woman raves as much as if each particular leaf had become suddenly a bunch of thorns. If a dove were to be transformed to a hawk the change would not be more complete, more startling, than that which occurs when the spoilt woman of well-bred company manners puts off her mask to her maid, and shows her temper over trifles. Whoever else may suffer the grievances of life, she cannot understand that she also must be at times one of the sufferers with the rest; and if by chance the bad moment comes, the person accompanying it has a hard time of it.

There are spoilt women also who have their peculiar exercises in thought and opinion, and who cannot suffer that any one should think differently from themselves, or find those things sacred which to them are accursed. They will hear nothing but what is in harmony with themselves; and they take it as a personal insult when men or women attempt to reason with them, or even hold their own without flinching. This kind is to be found specially among the more intellectual of a family or a circle—women who are pronounced clever by their friends, and who have been so long accustomed to think themselves clever that they have become spoilt mentally as others are personally, and fancy that minds and thoughts must follow in their direction, just as eyes and hands must follow and attend their sisters. The spoilt woman of the mental kind is a horrid nuisance generally. She is greatly given to large discourse. But discourse of a kind that leans all to one side, and that denies the right of any one to criticize, doubt, or contradict, is an intellectual Tower of Pisa under the shadow of which it is not pleasant to live.

**DOVECOTS**

Times must be very bad indeed if a faithful few are not still left to keep the sources of society sweet and wholesome. When corruption has gone through the whole mass and all classes are bad alike, everything comes to an end, and there is a general overthrow of national life; but while some are left pure and unspotted, we are not quite undone, and we may reasonably hope for better days in the future. In the midst of the reign of the Girl of the Period, with her slang and her boldness—of the fashionable woman, with her denial of duty and her madness for pleasure—we come every now and then upon a group of good girls of the real old English type; the faithful few growing up silently among us, but none the less valuable because they are silent and make no public display; doves who are content with life as they have it in the dovecot, and have no desire to be either eagles dwelling on romantic heights, or peacocks displaying their pride in sunny courts. We find these faithful few in town and country alike; but they are rifest in the country, where there is less temptation to go wrong than there is in the large towns, and where life is simpler and the moral tone undeniably higher. The leading feature of these girls is their love of home and of their own family, and their power of making occupation and happiness out of apparently meagre materials. If they are the elders, they find amusement and interest in their little brothers and sisters, whom they consider immensely funny and to whom they are as much girl-mothers as sisters; if they are the youngers, they idolize their baby nephews and nieces. For there is always a baby going on somewhere about these houses—babies being the great excitement of home-life, and the antiseptic element among women which keeps everything else pure. They are passionately attached to papa and mamma, whom they think the very king and queen of humanity, yet whom they do not call by even endearing slang names. It has never occurred to them to criticize them as ordinary mortals; and as they have not been in the way of learning the prevailing accent of disrespect, they have not shaken off that almost religious veneration for their parents which all young people naturally feel, if they have been well brought up and are not corrupted.

The yoke in most middle-class country-houses is one fitting very loosely round all necks; and as they have all the freedom they desire or could use, the girls are not fretted by undue pressure, and are content to live in peace under such restraints as they have. They adore their elder brothers who are from home just beginning the great battle of life for themselves, and confidently believe them to be the finest fellows going, and the future great men of the day if only they care to put out those splendid talents of theirs, and take the trouble of plucking the prizes within their reach. They may have a slight reservation perhaps, in favour of the brother's friend, whom they place on a pedestal of almost equal

height. But they keep their mental architecture a profound secret from every one, and do not suffer it to grow into too solid a structure unless it has some surer foundation than their own fancy. For, though doves are loving, they are by no means lovesick, and are too healthy and natural and quietly busy for unwholesome dreams. If one of them marries, they all unite in loving the man who comes in among them. He is adopted as one of themselves, and leaps into a family of idolizing sisters who pet him as their brother—with just that subtle little difference in their petting, in so much as it comes from sisters unaccustomed, and so has the charm of novelty without the prurient excitement of naughtiness. But this kind of thing is about the most dangerous to a man's moral nature that can befall him. Though pretty to see and undeniably pleasant to experience, and though perfectly innocent in every way, still, nothing enervates him so much as this idolatrous submission of a large family of women. In a widow's house, where there are many daughters and no sons, and where the man who marries one marries the whole family and is worshipped accordingly, the danger is of course increased tenfold; but if there are brothers and a father, the sister's husband, though affectionately cooed over, is not made quite such a fuss with, and the association is all the less hurtful in consequence.

These girls lead a by no means stupid life, though it is a quiet one, and without any spasmodic events or tremendous cataclysms. They go a great deal among the village poor, and they teach at the Sunday-school, and attend the mothers' meetings and clothing-clubs and the like, and learn to get interested in their humbler friends, who after all are Christian sisters. They read their romances in real life instead of in three-volume novels, and study human nature as it is—in the rough certainly, but perhaps in more genuine form than if they learnt it only in what is called society. Then they have their pleasures, though they are of an unexciting kind and what fast girls would call awfully slow. They have their horses and their croquet parties, their lawn tennis and their archery meetings; they have batches of new music, and a monthly box from Mudie's—and they know the value of both; they go out to tea, and sometimes to dinner, in the neighbourhood; and they enjoy the rare county balls with a zest unknown to London girls who are out every night in the week. They have their village flower-shows, which the great families patronize in a free-and-easy kind of way, and which give occupation for weeks before and subject for talk for weeks after; their school feasts, where the pet parson of the district comes out with his best anecdotes, and makes mild jokes at a long distance from Sydney Smith; their periodical missionary meetings, where they have great guns from London, and where they hear unctuous stories about the saintliness of converted cannibals, and are required to believe in the power of change of creed to produce an ethnological miracle; they have their friends to stay with them—school-girl friends—with whom they exchange deep confidences, and go back over the old days—so old to their youth!—their brothers come down in the summer, and their brothers' friends come with them, and do a little spooning in the shrubbery. But there is

more spooning done at picnics than anywhere else; and more offers are made there under the shadow of the old ruin, or in the quiet leafy nook by the river side, than at any other gathering time of the country. And as we are all to a certain extent what we are made by our environment, the doves take to these pleasures quite kindly and gratefully, as being the only ones known to them, and enjoy themselves in a simplicity of circumstances which would give no pleasure at all to girls accustomed to more highly-spiced entertainments.

Doves know very little of evil. They are not in the way of learning it; and they do not care to learn it. The few villagers who are supposed to lead ill lives are spoken of below the breath, and carefully avoided without being critically studied. When the railway is to be carried past their quiet nest, there is an immense excitement as the report goes that a knot of strange men have been seen scattering themselves over the fields with their little white flags and theodolites, their measuring lines and levels. But when the army of navvies follows after, the excitement is changed to consternation, and a general sense of evil to come advancing ruthlessly towards them. The clergy of the district organize special services, and the scared doves keep religiously away from the place where the navvies are hutted. They think them little better than the savages about whom the Deputation tell them once or twice a year; and they create almost as much terror as an encampment of gipsies. They represent the lawless forces of the world and the unknown sins of strong men; and the wildest story about them is not too wild to be believed. The railway altogether is a great offence to the neighbourhood, and the line is assumed to destroy the whole scenic beauty of the place. There are lamentations over the cockneys it will bring down; over the high prices it will create, the immorality it will cause. Only the sons who are out in the world and have learnt how life goes on outside the dovecot, advocate keeping pace with the times; and a few of the stronger minded of the sisters listen to them with a timid admiration of their breadth and boldness, and think there may be two sides to the question after all. When the dashing captain and his fast wife suddenly appear in the village—as often happens in these remote districts—the doves are in a state of great moral tribulation. They are scandalized by Mrs. Highflyer's costume and complexion, and think her manners odd and doubtful; her slang shocks them; and when they meet her in the lanes, talking so loudly and laughing so shrilly with that horrid-looking man in a green cutaway, they feel as fluttered as their namesakes when a hawk is hovering over the farmyard. The dashing captain, who does not use a prayer-book at church, who stares at all the girls so rudely, and who has even been seen to wink at some of the prettier cottage girls, and his handsome wife with her equivocal complexion and pronounced fashions, who makes eyes at the curate, are never heartily adopted by the local magnates, though vouched for by some far-away backer; and the doves always feel them to be strange bodies among them, and out of their rightful element somehow. If things go quietly without an explosion, well and good; but if the truth bursts to the surface in the shape of a London detective, and the Highflyers are

found to be no better than they should be, the consternation and half-awed wonderment at the existence of so much effrontery and villany in their atmosphere create an impression which no time effaces. The first clash of innocence with evil is an event in the life of the innocent the effect of which nothing ever destroys.

The dovecot is rather dull in the winter, and the doves are somewhat moped; but even then they have the church to decorate, and the sentiment of Christmas to enliven them. The absent ones of the family too, return to the old hearth while they can; and as the great joy of the dovecot lies in the family union that is kept up, and in the family love which is so strong, the visits of those who no longer live at home bring a moral summer as warm and cheering as the physical sunshine. But they do not all assemble. For many of the doves marry men whose work lies abroad; these quiet country-houses being the favourite matrimonial hunting-grounds for colonists and Anglo-Indians. So that some are always absent whose healths are drunk in the traditional punch, while eyes grow moist as the names are given. Doves are not disinclined to marry men who have to go abroad, for all the passionate family love common to them. Travel is a golden dream to them in their still homes; but travel properly companioned. For even the most adventurous among them are not independent, as we mean when we speak of independence in women. They are essentially home-girls, family-girls, doves who cannot exist without a dovecot, however humble. The family is everything to them; and they are utterly unfit for the solitude which so many of our self-supporting women can accept quite resignedly. Not that they are necessarily useless even as breadwinners. They could work, if pushed to it; but it must be in a quiet womanly way, with the mother, the sister, the husband as the helper—with the home as the place of rest and the refuge. Their whole lines are laid in love and quietness; not by any means in inaction, but all centred within the home circle. If they marry, they find the love of their husband enough for them, and have no desire for other men's admiration. Their babies are all the world to them, and they do not think maternity an infliction, as so many of the miserably fashionable think it. They like the occupation of housekeeping, and feel pride in their fine linen and clean service, in their well-ordered table and neatly-balanced accounts. They are kind to their servants, who generally come from the old home, and whose families they therefore know; but they keep up a certain dignity and tone of superiority towards them in the midst of all their kindness, which very few town-bred mistresses can keep to town-bred maids. They have always been the aristocracy in their native place; and they carry through life the ineffaceable stamp which being 'the best' gives.

Doves are essentially mild and gentle women; not queens of society even when they are pretty, because not caring for social success and therefore not laying themselves out for it; for if they please at home that is all they care for, holding love before admiration, and the esteem of one higher than the praise of many. If a fault is to be found with them it is that they have not perhaps quite enough salt for the general taste, used as it is to such



highly-seasoned social food; but do we really want our women to have so very much character? Do not our splendid passionate creatures lead madly wretched lives and make miserably uncomfortable homes? and are not our glorious heroines better in pictures and in fiction than seated by the domestic fire, or checking the baker's bill? No doubt the quiet home-staying doves seem tame enough when we think of the gorgeous beings made familiar to us by romance, and history, which is more romantic still; but as our daily lives run chiefly in prose, our doves are better fitted for things as they are; and to men who want wives and not playthings, and who care for the peace of family life and the dignity of home, they are beyond price when they can be found and secured. So that, on the whole, we can dispense with the splendid creatures of character and the magnificent queens of society sooner than with the quiet and unobtrusive doves. And though they do spoil men most monstrously, they know where to draw the line, and while petting their own at home they keep strangers abroad at a distance, and make themselves respected as only modest and gentle women are respected by men.

**BORED HUSBANDS.**

The curtain falls on joined hands when it does not descend on a tragedy; and novels for the most part end with a wreath of orange-blossoms and a pair of high-stepping greys, as the last act that claims to be recorded. For both novelists and playwrights assume that with marriage all the great events of life have ceased, and that, once wedded to the beloved object, there is sure to be smooth sailing and halcyon seas to the end of time. It sounds very cynical and shocking to question this pretty belief; but unfortunately for us who live in the world as it is and not as it is supposed to be, we find that even a union with the beloved object does not always ensure perfect contentment in the home, and that bored husbands are by no means rare.

The ideal honeymoon is of course an Elysian time, during which nothing works rusty nor gets out of joint; and the ideal marriage is only a life-long honeymoon, where the happiness is more secure and the love deeper, if more sober; but the prose reality of one and the other has often a terrible dash of weariness in it, even under the most favourable conditions. Boredom begins in the very honeymoon itself. At first starting in married life there are many dangers to be encountered, not a shadow of which was seen in the wooing. There are odd freaks of temper turning up quite unexpectedly; there is the sense, so painful to some men, of being tied for life, of never being able to be alone again, never free and without responsibilities; there are misunderstandings to-day and the struggle for mastery to-morrow—the cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, which may prove to be the tempest that will destroy all; there is the unrest of travelling, and the awkwardness of unusual association, to help in the general discomfort; or, if the happy pair have settled down in a vale and a cottage for their month, there is the 'sad satiety' which all men feel after a time when they have had one companion only, with no outside diversion to cause a break. But the honeymoon at last draws to a close, and the relieved bridegroom gets back to his old haunts, to his work, his friends, and his club; and though he takes to all these things again with a difference, still they are helps and additions. This is the time of trial to a woman. If she gets over this pinch, and is sensible enough to understand that human nature cannot be kept up at high pressure, even in love, and that a man must sooner or later come down from romance to work-a-day prose, from the passionate lover to the cool and sober husband—if she can understand this, and settle into his pace, without fretting on the one hand or casting about for unhealthy distractions on the other—she will do well, and will probably make a pleasant home, and thereby diminish the boredom of life. But unfortunately, not every woman can do this; and it is just during this time of the man's transition from the lover to the friend that so many women begin to make shipwreck of their own happiness and his.

They think to keep him a romantic wooer still, by their tears at his prosaic indifference to the little sentimentalities once so eagerly accepted and offered; they try to hold him close by their flattering but somewhat tiresome exactions; their jealousies—very pretty perhaps, and quite as flattering—are infinite, and as baseless as they are infinite; all of which is very nice up to a certain point and in the beginning of things, but all of which gets wearisome as time goes on, and a man wants both a little change and a little rest. But women do not see this; or seeing it, they cannot accept it as a necessary condition of things; wherefore they go on in their fatal way, and by the very unwisdom of their own love bore their husband out of his. Or they grow substantially cold because he is superficially cooler, and think themselves justified in ceasing to love him altogether because he takes their love for granted, and so has ceased to woo it.

If they are jealous, or shy, or unsocial, as so many women are, they make life very heavy by their exclusiveness, and the monastic character they give the home. A man married to a woman of this kind is, in fact, a house prisoner, whose only free spaces lie beyond the four walls of home. His bachelor friends are shut out. They smoke; or entice him to drink more than his wife thinks is good for him; or they induce him to bet on the Derby; or to play for half-crowns at whist or billiards; or they lead him in some other way of offence abhorrent to women. So the bachelor friends are shouldered out; and when the husband wants to entertain them, he must invite them to his club—if he has one—and pay the penalty when he gets home. In a few years' time his wife will be glad to encourage her sons' young friends to the house, for the sake of the daughters on hand; but husbands and sons are in a different category, and there are few fathers who do not learn, as time goes on, how much the mother will allow that the wife refused.

If bachelor friends are shouldered out of the house, all female friends are forbidden anything like an intimate footing, save those few whom the wife thinks specially devoted to herself and of whom she is not jealous. And these are very few. There are perhaps no women in the world so exclusive in their dealings with their husbands as are Englishwomen. A husband is bound to one woman only, no doubt; but the average wife thinks him also bound to have no affection whatever outside her and perhaps her family. If he meets an intelligent woman, pleasant to talk to, of agreeable manners and ready wit, and if he talks to her in consequence with anything like persistency or interest, he offends against the unwritten law; and his wife, whose utmost power of conversation consists in putting in a yes or no with tolerable accuracy of aim, thinks herself slighted and ill-used. She may be young and pretty, and dearly loved for her own special qualities; and her husband may not have a thought towards his new friend, or any other woman, in the remotest degree trenching on his allegiance to her; but the fact that he finds pleasure, though only of an intellectual and æsthetic kind, in the society of any other woman, that he feels an interest in her life, chooses her for his friend, or finds

community of pursuits or sympathy in ideas, makes his wife by just so much a victim and aggrieved.

And yet what a miserably monotonous home is that to which she would confine him! He is at his office all day, badgered and worried with various business complications, and he comes home tired, perhaps cross—even well-conducted husbands have that way sometimes. He finds his wife tired and cross too; so that they begin the evening together mutually at odds, she irritated by small cares and he disturbed by large anxieties. Or he finds her preoccupied and absorbed in her own pursuits, and quite disinclined to make any diversion for his sake. He asks her for some music; she used to be ready enough to sing and play to him in the old love-making days; but she refuses now. Either she has some needlework to do, which might have been done during the day when he was out, or baby is asleep in the nursery, and music in the drawing-room would disturb him—at all events she cannot sing or play to-night; and even if she does—he has heard all her pieces so often! If he is not a reading-man, those long, dull, silent evenings are very trying. She works, and drives him wild with the click of her needle; or she reads the last new novel, and he hates novels, and gets tired to death when she insists on telling him all about the story and the characters; or she chooses the evening for letter-writing, and if the noise of her pen scratching over the paper does not irritate him, perhaps it sends him to sleep, when at least he is not bored. But dull, objectless, and vacant as their evenings are, his wife would not hear of any help from without to give just that little fillip which would prevent boredom and not create ceremony. She would think her life had gone to pieces, and that only desolation was before her, if he hinted that his home was dull, and that though he loves her very dearly and wants no other wife but her, yet that her society only—*toujours perdrix*, without change or addition—is a little stupid, however nice the partridge may be, and that things would be bettered if Mrs. or Miss So-and-So came in sometimes, just to brighten up the hours. And if he were to make a practice of bringing home his men friends, she would probably let all parties concerned feel pretty distinctly that she considered the home her special sanctuary, and that guests whom she did not invite were intruders. She would perhaps go willingly enough to a ball or crowded *soirée*, or she might like to give one; but that intimate form of society, which is a mere enlargement of the home life, she dreads as the supplementing of deficiencies, and thinks her married happiness safer in boredom than in any diversion from herself as the sole centre of her husband's pleasure.

Home life stagnates in England; and in very few families is there any mean between dissipation and this stagnation. We can scarcely wonder that so many husbands think matrimony a mistake as we have it in our insular arrangements; that they look back regretfully to the time when they were unfettered and not bored; or that their free friends, who watch them as wild birds watch their caged companions, curiously and reflectively, share their opinion. Wife and home, after all, make up but part of a man's

life; they are not his all, and do not satisfy the whole of his social instinct; nor is any one woman the concentration of all womanhood to a man, leaving nothing that is beautiful, nor in its own unconjugal way desirable, on the outside. Besides, when with his wife a man is often as much isolated as when alone, for any real companionship there is between them. Few women take a living interest in the lives of men, and fewer still understand them. They expect the husband to sympathize with them in the kitchen gossip and the nursery chatter, the neighbours' doings and all the small household politics; but they are utterly unable to comprehend his pleasures, his thoughts, his duties, the responsibilities of his profession, or the bearings of any public question in which he takes a part.

Even if this were not so, and granting that they could enter fully into his life and sympathize with him as intelligent equals, not only as compassionate saints or loving children, there would still be the need of novelty, and still the certainty of boredom without it. For human life, like all other forms of life, must have a due proportion of fresh elements continually added to keep it sweet and growing, else it becomes stagnant and stunted. And daily intercourse undeniably exhausts the moral ground. After the close companionship of years no one can remain mentally fresh to the other, unless indeed one or both be of the rarest order of mind and of a practically inexhaustible power of acquiring knowledge. Save these exceptional instances, we must all of necessity get worn out by constant intercourse. We know every thought, every opinion, and almost every square inch of information possessed; we have heard the old stories again and again, and know exactly what will lead up to them, and at what point they will begin; we have measured the whole sweep of mind, and have probed its depths; and though we may love and value what we have learnt, yet we want something new—fresh food for interest, though not necessarily a new love for the displacement of the old. But this is what very few Englishwomen can understand or will allow. They hold so intensely by the doctrine of unity that they are even jealous of a man's pursuits, if they think these take up any place in his mind which might also be theirs. They must be good for every part of his life; and the poorest of them all must be his only source of interest, suffering no other woman to share his admiration nor obtain his friendship, though this would neither touch his love nor interfere with their rights. Friendship is a hard saying to them, and one they cannot receive. Wherefore they keep a tight grasp on the marital collar, and suffer no relief of monotony by judicious loosening, nor by generous faith in integral fidelity. The practical result of which is that most men are horribly bored at home, and that the mass of them really suffer from the domestic stagnation to which national customs and the exclusiveness of women doom them so soon as they become family men. It must however, in fairness be added, that in general they obtain some kind of compensation; and that very few walk meekly in their bonds without at times slipping them off, with or without the concurrence of their wives.

***Free***editorial 