

FERN FANNY

FOLLY AS IT FLIES; HIT AT
BY FANNY FERN

Fanny Fern
Folly as It Flies; Hit
at by Fanny Fern

http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=24726313

Folly as It Flies; Hit at by Fanny Fern:

Содержание

PREFACE	5
A DISCOURSE UPON HUSBANDS	6
GRANDMOTHER'S CHAT ABOUT CHILDREN AND CHILDHOOD	26
WOMEN AND THEIR DISCONTENTS	42
WOMEN AND SOME OF THEIR MISTAKES	59
NOTES UPON PREACHERS AND PREACHING	78
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	83

**Fanny Fern
Folly as It Flies; Hit
at by Fanny Fern**

To

MY FRIEND

Robert Bonner,

EDITOR OF THE NEW YORK LEDGER

**For fourteen years, the team of Bonner and Fern,
has trotted over the road at 2.40 pace, without a
snap of the harness, or a hitch of the wheels. –
Plenty of oats, and a skilful rein, the secret**

PREFACE

Yours Truly,

FANNY FERN.

A DISCOURSE UPON HUSBANDS

I WISH every husband would copy into his memorandum book this sentence, from a recently published work: "*Women must be constituted very differently from men. A word said, a line written, and we are happy; omitted, our hearts ache as if for a great misfortune. Men cannot feel it, or guess at it; if they did, the most careless of them would be slow to wound us so.*"

The grave hides many a heart which has been stung to death, because one who might, after all, have loved it after a certain careless fashion, was deaf, dumb, and blind to the truth in the sentence we have just quoted, or if not, was at least restive and impatient with regard to it. Many men, marrying late in life, being accustomed only to take care of *themselves*, and that in the most erratic, rambling, exciting fashion, eating and drinking, sleeping and walking whenever and wherever their fancy, or good cheer and amusement, questionable or unquestionable, prompted; come at last, when they get tired of this, with their selfish habits fixed as fate, to — matrimony. For a while it is a novelty. Shortly, it is strange as irksome, this always being obliged to consider the comfort and happiness of another. To have something always hanging on the arm, which *used* to swing free, or at most, but twirl a cane. Then, they think their duty done if they provide food and clothing, and refrain (possibly) from harsh words. Ah — *is it?* Listen to that sigh as you close the door.

Watch the gradual fading of the eye, and paling of the cheek, not from age-she should be yet young – but that gnawing pain at the heart, born of the settled conviction that the great hungry craving of her soul, as far as you are concerned, must go forever unsatisfied. God help such wives, and keep them from attempting to slake their souls' thirst at poisoned fountains.

Think, you, her husband, how little a kind word, a smile, a caress to *you*, how much to *her*. If you call these things "childish" and "beneath your notice," then you should never have married. There are men who should remain forever single. You are one. You have no right to require of a woman her health, strength, time and devotion, to mock her with this shadowy, unsatisfying return. A new bonnet, a dress, a shawl, a watch, anything, everything but what a *true* woman's heart most craves – sympathy, appreciation, love. She may be rich in everything else; but if she be poor in these, and is a *good* woman, she had better die.

There are hard, unloving, cold monstrosities of women, (rare exceptions,) who neither require love, nor know how to give it. We are not speaking of these. That big-hearted, loving, noble men have occasionally been thrown away upon such, does not disprove what we have been saying. But even a man thus situated has greatly the advantage of a woman in a similar position, because, over the needle a woman may think herself into an Insane Asylum, while the active, out-door turmoil of business life is at least a *sometime* reprieve to *him*.

Do you ask me, "Are there no happy wives?" God be praised, yes, and glorious, lovable husbands, too, who know how to treat a woman, and would have her neither fool nor drudge. Almost every wife would be a good and happy wife, *were she only loved enough*. Let husbands, present and prospective, think of this.

"Now, I am a clerk, with eight hundred dollars salary, and yet my wife expects me to dress her in first-class style. What would you advise me to do – leave her?"

These words I unintentionally overheard in a public conveyance. I went home, pondering them over. "Leave her!" Were *you* not to blame, sir, in selecting a foolish, frivolous wife, and expecting her to confine her desires, as a sensible woman ought, and would, within the limits of your small salary? Have *you, yourself*, no "first-class" expenses, in the way of rides, drinks and cigars, which it might be well for you to consider while talking to her of retrenchment? Did it ever occur to you, that under all that frivolity, which you admired in the maid, but deplore and condemn in the wife, there may be, after all, enough of the true woman, to appreciate and sympathize with a *kind, loving* statement of the case, in its parental as well as marital relations? Did it ever occur to you, that if you require no more from *her*, in the way of self-denial, than you are willing to endure *yourself*— in short, if you were *just* in this matter, as all husbands are *not*— it might bring a pair of loving arms about your neck, that would be a talisman amid future toil, and a pledge of co-operation in it, that would give wings to effort? And should it

not be so immediately – should you encounter tears and frowns – would you not do well to remember the hundreds of wives of drunken husbands, who, through the length and breadth of the land, are thinking —*not* of "*leaving*" them, but how, day by day, they shall more patiently bear their burden, toiling with their own feeble hands, in a woman's restricted sphere of effort, to make up their deficiencies, closing their ears resolutely to any recital of a husband's failings, nor asking advice of aught save their own faithful, wifely hearts, "*what course they shall pursue?*"

And to all young men, whether "clerks" or otherwise, we would say, if you marry a humming-bird, don't expect that marriage will instantly convert it into an owl; and if you have caught it, and caged it, without thought of consequences, don't, like a coward, shrink from your self-assumed responsibility, and turn it loose in a dark wood, to be devoured by the first vulture.

The other day I read in a paper, "Wanted – board for a young couple." What a pity, I thought, that they should begin life in so unnatural and artificial a manner! What a pity that in the sacredness of a home of their own, they should not consecrate their life-long promise to walk hand in hand, for joy or for sorrow! What a pity that the sweet home-cares which sit so gracefully on the young wife and housekeeper, should be waved aside for the stiff etiquette of a public table or drawing-room! What a pity that the husband should not have a "*home*" to return to when his day's toil is over, instead of a "room," as in his lonely bachelor days!

"Oh, you little rascal" said a young father doubling up his fist at his first baby, as it lay kicking its pink toes upon the bed; "oh, you little rascal, precious little attention have I had from your mamma since *you* came to town. I don't know but I am very sorry you are here."

Now, this is a subject upon which I have thought a great deal, and often wished I had wisdom to write about. It is a very nice point for a young wife to settle rightly – the respective claims of the helpless little baby, and those of the young husband, who has hitherto been the sole recipient of her caresses and care. The cry of that little baby is painful to him. He has not yet adjusted himself to the position of a father. It is a nice little creature, of course; but why need *she* be so much in the nursery and so little in the parlor? Why can't she delegate the washing, and dressing, and getting-to-sleep, to a nurse, and go about with *him*, as she used before it came. It is very dull to sit alone, waiting until all these processes have been gone through; and, beside, it is plain to see that, when he does wait till then, her vitality is so nearly exhausted that she has very little left to entertain him, or to go abroad for entertainment; and if she does the latter, she is so fearful that something may go wrong with that experimental first baby in her absence, that her anxiety becomes contagious, and *his* pleasure is spoiled.

Now, to begin with: it takes two years for a young married couple to adjust themselves to their new position. "*His* mother never fussed that way over *her* babies, and is not *he* a living

example of the virtue of neglect?" Now "*her* mother preferred to do just as *she* is doing, and thought any other course heartless and unnatural, at least while the baby is so very little." Now stop a bit, my dears, or you never will get beyond that milestone on your journey. You have got, both of you, to drop your respective mothers, as far as quoting their practice is concerned. Never mention them to one another, if you can possibly keep your mouths shut on their superior virtues, when you wish to settle any such question; because it will always remain true, to the end of time, that a husband's relations, like the king, can do no wrong, though they may be in the constant practice of doing that in their own families, which they consider highly improper in yours.

Now, do you and John – I suppose his name is John – two-thirds of the men are named John, and the Johns are always great strapping fellows – do you and John just paddle your own canoe, as they do. It is yours, isn't it? Well, steer it, day by day, by the light you have, as well as you know how. Mind that *you* both pull together; shut down outside interference, which is the cause of two-thirds of the unhappiness of the newly married, and you will be certain to do well enough, *at last*.

When a clergyman comes to a new congregation, or a school-teacher to an untried school – when a new business partner enters a firm – nobody expects things to go right immediately, without a hitch or two, till matters adjust themselves. It is only in the cases of newly converted persons, or the newly married, that people insist upon human nature becoming immediately,

and instantaneously, sublimated and fit for heaven. Now in both cases, as I take it, time must be given, as in the other relations, for assimilation.

This point being conceded, – and I am supposing, my dear reader, that you are not quite a natural fool, – why should you or the young couple consider the whole thing a failure, merely because this process cannot be accomplished in a day and without a few mistakes, any more than in the cases above cited?

But we have left that little experimental first baby kicking too long on the bed – it is time we return to him. Now, I am very sorry that John said what he did to that young mother, even "in joke." *She* knew well enough that he meant two-thirds of it. *She* is not quite strong yet either, for the baby is but three months old; and it is very true that it does cry a great deal; and though *she* don't mind it, John does; and really, she can't leave it much with a nurse, while it is so very little. And yet, it *is* dull for John to sit alone in the parlor while she is soothing it; and what *shall* she do? That's just it, – what *shall* she do? *She* really gets in quite a nervous tremble, when it is time for him to come home – what with hoping baby will be on its good behavior, and fearing that it may not. Not that, for one instant, she has ever been sorry that she was a mother – oh no, no! You may burn her flesh with a red-hot iron, and you can never make her say that. God forbid!

Now, John, if your little wife loves her baby like that, is not it a proof that you have chosen a wife wisely and well? and are you not willing to face like a man – I *should* say, like a woman, –

the petty disagreeables which are consequent upon the initiatory life of the little creature in whose veins flows your own blood? Surely, you cannot answer me no. When you married, you did not expect to live a bachelor's life. If you did, then I have nothing more to say. I shall pay that compliment to your manhood to suppose, that you did not so deceive the young girl, who trusted her future in your hands, and that you did not expect that *she alone* was to practice the virtue of self-abnegation.

Well, then, be patient with the wife who is so well worthy of your sympathy and co-operation, in this, her conscientious attempt to bring up rightly the first baby. When the next comes, and I know you will have a next, or your name isn't John, she will not be so anxious. She will not think it will die, every time it has the stomach-ache. But at present it is cruel in you to say those things which distress her, even "in joke," because, as I tell you, she is trying faithfully to settle these important questions, which take time for each of you to decide, so that you may not wrong the other. *Help* her do it. Soothe her when she is nervous and weary. *Love* that little baby, though at present it does not even smile at you. If you can't love it, *make believe love it*, till the little thing knows enough to know you. Do it for *her* sake, who has earned your tenderest cherishing as the mother of your child. *Begin* right. Know that whatsoever people may say, *that Love and Duty are all there is of life*. Out of these two grow all the pleasure and happiness mortals can find this side of the grave. So, John, don't wear out your boots trudging round elsewhere to find them,

for it will be a miserable failure.

I think every woman will agree with me, that it is perfectly astonishing the "muss" (to use a New Yorkism) which a male pair of hands can make in your room in the short space of five minutes. You have put everything in that dainty order, without which you could not, for the life of you, accomplish any work. There is not a particle of dust on anything, in sight, or out of sight – which last is quite as important. All your little pet things are in the right location; pictures plumb on the wall, work-box and ink-stand tidy and within hail. Mr. Smith comes in. He wants "a bit of string." Mr. Smith is always wanting a bit of string. Mr. Smith says kindly (good fellow) "don't get up, dear, I'll find it." That's just what you are afraid of, but it won't do to say so; so you sit still and perspire, while Mr. Smith looks for his "bit of string." First, he throws open the door of the wrong closet, and knocks down all your dresses, which he catches up with irreverent haste, and hangs in a heap on the first peg. Then he says (innocently,) "Oh – h – I went to the wrong closet, didn't I?" Then he proceeds to the right closet, and finds the "bit of string." In taking it down he catches it on the neck of a phial. Down it comes smash – with the contents on the floor. Mr. Smith says "D – estruction!" in which remark you fully coincide. Then Mr. Smith wants a pair of scissors to cut his "bit of string;" so he goes to your work-box, which he upsets, scattering needles, literally at "sixes and sevens," all over the floor, mixed with bodkins, spools, tape, and torment only knows what. He gathers them up at one fell swoop,

and ladles them back into the box, in a manner peculiarly and eminently masculine; and asks if – the – hinge – of – the – lid – of – that – box – was – broken – before, or if "*he* did it." As if the rascal didn't know! But of course you tell the old fib, that it had been loose for some time, and that it was no manner of consequence; all the while devoutly hoping that this might be the last mischance. Not a bit of it. "He thinks he will take a little brandy to set him right." So he uncorks the bottle on the spotless white toilet-cover of your bureau, spills the brandy all over it, powders the sugar on the covers of a nice book, and lays the sticky spoon on a nice lace collar that has just been "done up." Then he uncorks your cologne-bottle to anoint his smoky whiskers, and sets down the bottle, leaving the cork out. Then he takes up your gold bracelet and tries it on his wrist, "to see if it will fit." The "*fit*" need I say, is *not* in the bracelet – the fastening of which he breaks. Then he throws up the window, "to see what sort of a day it is;" and over goes a vase of flowers, which you have been arranging with all the skill you were mistress of, to display the perfection of each blossom. He looks at the vase, and says, "Miserable thing! it was always rickety; I must buy you a better one, dear," which you devoutly hope he will do, though a long acquaintance with that gentleman's habits does not authorize you in it. Then Mr. Smith goes to the glass and takes a solemn survey of his beard. Did you ever notice the difference between a man's and a woman's way of looking in the glass? It is wonderfully characteristic! Woman perks her head on one

side saucily and well pleased like a bird; man strides in a lordly, dignified way up to it as if it were a very *petty* thing for him to do, but meantime he'd like to catch that glass saying that he is not a fine-looking fellow! Well – Mr. Smith takes a solemn survey of his beard, which he fancies "needs clipping," and takes your sharpest and best pair of scissors, for the wiry operation; the stray under-brush meanwhile falling wheresoever it best pleases the laws of gravitation to send it. Then Mr. Smith, says, "Really, dear, this is such a pleasant room, one hates to leave it, but – alas! business – business."

"*Business!*" I should think so – business enough, to put that room to rights, for the next three hours!

Did you ever hear an old maid talk about matrimony, or a girl who was trembling on the brink of old-maidism, and feared to launch away? If there is anything that effectually disgusts a married woman, it is that. What can an old maid know about such things? As well might I write an agricultural and horticultural description of a country by looking on a map. What pitying compassion she has for married men, every one of whom is victimized because he did not select *her* to make him "the happiest of men" – I believe that is the expression of a lover when on his suppliant knees; if not, I stand ready to be corrected – by anybody but an old maid. With what a languishing sigh she marvels that Mrs. Jones could ever be so criminal, as to neglect to sew on an ecstatic shirt-button for such a man as Jones; for whom it would be glory enough to hold a shaving-box while he

piled on the soap-suds, which is her particular element. What a shame that Jones cannot stifle his own baby, if he feels like it, by smoking in its face, and leave his boots, and coat, and vest on the parlor floor, if he takes a fancy to do it.

Ah – had Jones but a different wife! (And here imagine a sigh which, for depth and pro-*fun*-dity, none but a sentimental old maid on the anxious-seat can heave.) What pleasure to black his boots for him of a morning; to get up in the middle of the night, and cook a tenderloin beefsteak; to prove her devotion by standing on the front doorstep, with chattering teeth, in a cold northeaster, waiting for the dear coat to come home; to hang up his dear hat for him, to put away his dear cane, to take him up gently with the sugar-tongs, and lay him on the sofa till tea was ready, and then feed him like a sweet little bird, bless his shirt-buttons!

How hot his toast should always be; how strong his tea and coffee; how sweet his puddings; how mealy his potatoes; how punctually his clean shirt should be taken out of his drawer for him to put on; how sweetly his handkerchief should be cologn-ed with her own cologne, and his cigar-case magnanimously placed by her own hands in his dear little side-pocket, and how it should be the study of her life to find out when he wanted to sneeze, and arrest a sunbeam for the purpose.

Do you know what I wish?

That all the die-away old maids, who go sighing through creation with a rose-leaf to their noses, lecturing married women,

and sniveling for their little privileges, had but one neck, and that some muscular coat-sleeve, equal to the occasion, would give them one satisfying hug, and stop their nonsense.

I never witnessed an execution; but I saw a man the other day, married he surely was, trying to select a lace collar from out a dainty cobweb heap, sufficiently perplexing even to a practised female eye. The clumsy way he poised the gauzy things on his forefinger, with his head askew, trying to comprehend their respective merits! The long, weary sigh he drew, as the shopman handed him new specimens. The look of relief with which he heard *me* inquire for lace collars, saying, as plain as looks could say, "Ah! now, thank Heaven, I shall have a woman's view of the subject!" The *disinterested* manner in which, with this view, he pushed a stool forward for me to sit down, to watch upon which collar my eye fell complacently, all the while turning over *his* heap in the same idiotic way. Oh, it was funny! Of course, I kept him on the anxious seat a little while, persistently holding my tongue, the better to enjoy his dilemma. Didn't he fidget?

At length, fearful he might rush out for strychnine, I spake. I descanted upon shape, and texture, and pattern, and upon the probability of their "doing up" well, to all of which my rueful knight listened like a criminal who scents a reprieve. Then I made my selection; then he chose two exactly like mine, before you could wink, and with a sublime gratitude, refused to let the shopman consider the bill that was fluttering in his gloved fingers, "till he had made change for the lady." We understood

each other, for there are cases in which words are superfluous. No doubt his wife thought his taste in collars was excellent.

Men have *one* virtue; for instance: How delicious is their blunt, honest frankness toward each other, in their every-day intercourse, (politicians excepted,) in contrast with the polite little subterfuges, which form the basis of women-friendships. When one man goes to make a man-call on another, he talks when he pleases, and puts up his heels, and *don't* talk when he don't please. He is free to take a nap, or to take a book; and his host is as free, when he has had enough of him, or has any call away, to put on his hat and go out to attend to it: nor does the caller feel himself aggrieved. Now a woman's nose, under similar circumstances, would be up in the air a month, with the "slight" her female friend had put upon her. The more a woman *don't* want her friend to stay, the more she is bound to urge her to do it; and to ask her why she hadn't called before; and to wish that she might never go away, and all that sort of thing. What she remarks to her husband in private about it, afterward, is a thing you and I have nothing to do with. When two men meet, after a long absence, ten to one the first salutation is, "Old boy, how ugly you've grown." In the female department we reverse this. "I never saw you look prettier," being the preface to the aside – (what a fright she has become). Then – ("blest be the tie that binds") – mark one man meet another in the street – light his cigar at that other's nose, and pass on – without knowing the important fact, whether he lives in "a

brown-stone front" or not. How instructive the free-and-easy-and-audacious-manner in which, after this ceremony, they go their several ways to their tombstones, without a spoken word. See them in the streets, my sisters, exchanging passing remarks on any object of momentary street-interest, looking over one another's shoulders at each other's "extras," all the same as if they had been introduced in an orthodox Grundy fashion.

See them walk boldly up to a looking-glass, in a show window, and honestly stare at their ridiculous solemn selves, whereas, you women, pretend to be examining something else, when you are bent on a like errand, intent on smoothing your ruffled feathers.

The other day, in an omnibus, a man took a seat near the door, and not willing to step across the ladies' dresses, "nudged" a man above him to hand up his fare. Now the nudged creature was out of sorts – wanted his dinner or something – and so sat like an image, without responding; another nudge – with no better success – not a muscle of the nudged man's face moved. At last, with a heightened color, the new-comer handed it up himself; but he *didn't* talk to his next elbow-neighbor about "*some* people being *so* disagreeable," or call him a "nasty thing;" or try to look him into eternal annihilation, for what was really an ungracious action. He only rubbed his left ear a little, and put his mind on something else, and he looked very well while he was doing it, too.

If one woman is visiting another at her house, and the latter goes up stairs for anything, her female guest trots right after

her, like a little haunting dog. If she goes to the closet to get her gaiters, the shadow follows; she must be present when they are laced on; and discusses rights and lefts, and hosiery, etc. When her hostess goes to the glass, to arrange her hair, or put on her bonnet, the shadow follows, leaning both arms on the toilet-table to witness the operation. Without this bandbox-freemason-confidence, you see at once that female-friendship could not be that sacred intermingling of congenial natures that it is. Your friend would weep, sirs, and ask you "what she had done to be treated so."

A mouse and a woman! I know one of the latter, who always gets upon a table if she sees either coming. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu said a very witty thing once. I am afraid that not even her discovery of inoculation will cancel the sin of it. It was this: "The only comfort I ever had in being a woman is, that I can never marry one."

The moral of all this is, that women need reforming in their intercourse with one another. There should be less kissing among them, and more sincerity; less "palaver," and more reticence. But if you think I am going to tell them this in person, you *must* needs suppose that I have already arranged my sublunary affairs in case of accident. This not being the case, I decline the office, except so far as I can fill it at a safe distance on paper.

But then again what poor creatures are men when sick.

One might smile, were it not so pitiful, to see the impatience with which strong, active men succumb to the necessity of lying a

few weeks on a bed of sickness. The petulance which they in vain try to smother, at pills and potions, in place of their favorite dish, or drink, or cigar. The many orders they give, and countermand, in the same breath, to the wife and mother, who calmly accepts all this as part of her woman lot, and who dare not, for the life of her, smile at the fuss this caged lion is making, because his rations are cut off for a few days. This "being sick patiently," is a lesson we think man has yet to learn; but it is a good thing that they are sometimes laid on the shelf awhile, that they may better appreciate the cheerful endurance with which the feeble wife-mother bears the household cares all the same – on the pillow where lies with her the newly-born. Pain and weakness never interrupt her constant, careful forethought for her family. Husbands are too apt to take these every-day heroisms as matters of course. Therefore we say again, it is well sometimes that their attention should be awakened to it, when the doctor has vetoed for them awhile the office and the counting-room, and they are childishly frantic at gruel and closed blinds.

A woman's education is generally considered to be finished when she is married, whereas she has only arrived at A B C. If husbands took half the thought for, or interest in, their wives' *minds*, that wives are obliged to take for their husbands' *bodies*, women would be more intelligent. A missing button or string is often the cause of a bitter outcry; but what of the little woman who sits twiddling her thumbs in the presence of her husband's intelligent visitors, because she has not the slightest idea what

they are all talking about, and because, if she wouldn't mortify her husband, she must forever keep speechless? The *intelligent* husband, who, from fear of jeopardizing his puddings or his coffee, rests contented with this state of things, is guilty of an injustice toward that little woman, of which he ought to be heartily ashamed. True, when he married her this difference did not exist, or if it did, the glamour of youth and beauty, like a soft mist-veil over a landscape, hid, or clothed with loveliness, even defects. Because her youth and beauty have been uncomplainingly transmitted to his many children, whose little mouths must be fed, and little feet tended, *not* always by a hireling, through the long day; and whose little garments must be often planned and made, when she would gladly rest, while they sleep: should he, who is free to read and think, he who, coming in contact with strong, reflecting minds, has left her far behind, *never* turn a loving glance back, and with his own strong hand and encouraging smile, beg her not to sit down discouraged by the wayside — *she*, who "hath done what she could?" It is a *shame* for such a man to put on his soul's festival-dress for everybody *but* her who should be his soul's queen. It is a shame for a man to be willing so to degrade the mother and teacher of his children. It is a shame for him, while she sits sewing by his side, never to raise her drooping self-respect, by addressing an intelligent word to her about the book he is reading, or the subject upon which he is thinking, as he sits looking into the fire. I marvel and wonder at the God-like patience of these *upper housekeepers*, or I *should*,

had I not seen them dropping tears over the faces of their sleeping children, to cool their hearts.

I want to hear no nonsense about the mental "equality or inequality of the sexes." I am sick of it; that is a question men always start when women ask for *justice*, to dodge a fair answer. They may be equal or unequal – that's not what I am talking about. Napoleon the Third gives his dear French people diversions, fête days, and folly of all kinds, if they will only let *him* manage the politics. Our domestic Napoleons, too many of them, give flattery, bonnets and bracelets to women, and everything else *but*– justice; *that* question is one for *them* to decide, and many a gravestone records how it is done.

An intelligent man sometimes satisfies his conscience by saying of his wife, Oh, she's a good little woman, but there is one chamber in my soul through whose window she is not tall enough to peep. Get her but a footstool to stand on, Mr. Selfishness, and see how quick she will leap over that window sill! In short, *show but the disposition* to help her, and some manly, loving interest in her progress, instead of striding on alone, as you do, in your seven league mental boots, without a thought of her, and take my word for it, if you are thus *just* to her, and if she loves you, which last, by the way, all wives would do, if husbands were truly *just*, and you will find that though she has but average intellect, you will soon be astonished at the progress of your pupil.

I am not unaware that there are men whom the tailor makes, and women who are manufactured by the dress-maker, and that

they often marry each other. Let such fulfill their august destiny – to dress. I know that there are women much more intelligent than their husbands; let such show their intelligence by appearing not to know it. Still, it remains as I have said, that there exist the wives and mothers whose cause I now plead, fulfilling each day, not hopelessly – God forbid! but sometimes with a sad sinking of heart, the duties which no true wife or mother will neglect, even under circumstances rendered so disheartening by the husband and father, of whose praise, perhaps, the world is full. Let the latter see to it, that while the momentous question, "What *shall* I get for dinner?" may never, though the heavens should fall, evade her daily and earnest consideration, that *he* would sometimes, by his intelligent conversation, *when there is no company*, recognize the existence of the *soul* of this married housekeeper.

GRANDMOTHER'S CHAT ABOUT CHILDREN AND CHILDHOOD

WHAT can fascinate you in that ugly beast?"

This question was addressed to me, while regarding intently a camel in a collection of animals. "Ugly?" To me he was poetry itself. I was a little girl again. I was kneeling down at my little chair at family prayers. I didn't understand the prayers. "The Jews" were a sealed book to me then. I didn't know why "a solemn awe" should fall upon me either; or what *was* a solemn awe, anyhow. For a long time, I know, till I was quite a big girl, I thought it was one word – thus, *solemnor*– owing to the rapid manner in which it was pronounced. *Where* the heathen were going to be "brought in," or what they were coming for, I didn't understand; and as to "justification," and "sanctification," and "election," it was no use trying. But the walls of the pleasant room where family prayers were held, were papered with "a Scripture paper." There were great feathery palm-trees. There were stately females bearing pitchers on their heads. There were Isaac and Rebecca at the well; and there were *camels*, humped, bearing heavy burdens, with long flexile necks, resting under the curious, feathery trees, with their turbaned attendants. I understood *that*. To be sure, the blue was, as I now recollect it, sometimes on their noses as well as on the sky; and the green was on their hair as well

as on the grass; but at the pinafore-age we are not hypercritical. To me it was fairy-land; and often when "Amen" was said, I remained with my little chin in my palms, staring at my beloved camels, unconscious of the breakfast that was impending, for our morning prayers were said on an empty stomach.

I hear, now, the soft rustle of my mother's dress, as she rose after the "Amen." I see the roguish face of my baby brother, whose perfect beauty was long since hid under the coffin lid. I see the servants, disappearing through the door that led down to the kitchen, whence came the fragrant odor of coming coffee. I see my mother's flowering plants in the window, guiltless of dust or insect, blossoming like her virtues and goodness, perennially. I see black curly heads, and flaxen curly heads, of all sizes, but *all* "curly," ranged round the breakfast table; the names of many of their owners are on marble slabs in Mount Auburn now.

So you understand why I "stood staring at that ugly beast," in the collections of animals, and thinking of the changes, in all these long years, that had passed so swiftly; for now I am fifty-four, if I am a minute. And how wonderful it was, that after such a lapse of time, and so thickly crowded with events, that this family-morning-prayer-hour should come up with such astonishing vividness, at sight of that camel. Oh! I shall always love a camel. He will never look "ugly" to me. I am not sorry, nor ever have been, that I was brought up to "family prayers," unintelligible though they *then* were to me.

I hunted up those "Jews" after I got bigger, and many other

things, too, the names of which got wedged crosswise in my childish memory, and stuck there. They never did me any harm, that ever I found out. I have sent up many a prayer, both in joy and sorrow, since then, but not always "on my knees," which was considered essential in those days. As to the "solemn awe," I don't understand it now any better than when I was a child. I can't feel it, in praying, any more than I should when running to some dear, tried friend, with a burdened heart, to sob my grief away there, till I grew peaceful again. And all this came of a Camel.

And *now* I am a grandmother! and here come the holidays again. As I look into the crowded toyshops, I think, how lucky for their owners that children will always keep on being born, and that every one of them will have a grandmother. Uncles, and aunts, and cousins, are all very well, and fathers and mothers are not to be despised; but a *grandmother*, at holiday time, is worth them all. She might have given her own children crooked-necked squashes, and cucumbers, for dolls; with old towels pinned on by way of dresses, and trusted to their imaginations to supply all deficiencies. But this grandchild – ah! that's quite another affair. Is there anything good enough or costly enough for her? What if she smash her little china tea-set the minute she gets it? What if she break her wax doll? What if she maim and mutilate all the animals in her Noah's Ark? What if she perforate her big India-rubber ball with the points of the scissors? What if she tear the leaves from out her costly picture books? They have made the little dear happy, five minutes, at least; and grandmother has lived

long enough to know that five minutes of genuine happiness, in this world, is not to be despised. And that, after all, is the secret of a grandmother's indulgence. It isn't a weakness, as your puckery, sour people pretend. Grandmother has *lived*. She knows what life amounts to. She knows it is nothing but *broken toys* from the cradle to the grave. She knows that happy, chirping, radiant little creature before her, has all this experience to go through; and so, ere it comes, she watches with jealous care that nothing shall defraud her of one sunbeam of childhood. Childhood! She strains her gaze far beyond that, away into misty womanhood. She would fain live to stand between her and her first inevitable woman's heartache. From under her feet she would extract every thorn, remove every pebble. The winds that should blow upon her should be soft and perfumed. Every drop of blood in her body, every pulse of her heart, cries out, Oh! let her be happy. Alas! with all her knowledge, and notwithstanding all her chastening, she forgets, and ever will forget, when looking at that child, that the crown comes *after* the cross.

Broken Toys! As I picked them up under my feet this morning, where they had been tossed by careless little fingers, I fell thinking – just what I have told you.

I wish some philosopher would tell me at what age a child's naughtiness *really* begins. I am led to make this remark because I am subject to the unceasing ridicule of certain persons, who shall be nameless, who sarcastically advise me "to practice what I preach." As if, to begin with, anybody ever did *that*, from Adam's

time down. You see before I punish, or cause to be punished, a little child, I want to be sure that it hasn't got the stomach-ache; or is not cutting some tooth; or has not, through the indiscretion, or carelessness or ignorance of those intrusted with it, partaken of some indigestible mess, to cause its "naughtiness," as it is called. Then – I want those people who counsel me to such strict justice with a mere baby, to reflect how many times a day, according to this rule, *they* themselves ought to be punished for impatient, cross words; proceeding, it may be, from teeth, or stomach, or head, or nerves; but just as detrimental as to the results as if they came from meditated, adult naughtiness.

Scruples of conscience, you see – that's it. However, yesterday I said: Perhaps I *am* a little soft in this matter; perhaps it *is* time I began. So I stiffened up to it.

"Tittikins," said I to the cherub in question, "don't throw your hat on the floor; bring it to me, dear."

"I san't," replied Tittikins, who has not yet compassed the letter *h*. "I san't," – with the most trusting, bewitching little smile, as if I were only getting up a new play for her amusement, and immediately commenced singing to herself:

"Baby bye,
Here's a fly —
Let us watch him,
You and I;"

adding, "Didn't I sing that pretty?"

Now I ask you, was I to get up a fight with that dear little happy thing, just to carry my point? I tell you my "government" on that occasion was a miserable failure; I made up my mind, after deep reflection, that if it was not quite patent that a child was really malicious, it was best not to worry it with petty matters; I made up my mind that I would concentrate my strength on the first *lie* it told, and be conveniently blind to lesser peccadilloes. This course is just what I get abused for. But, I stood over a little coffin once, with part of my name on the silver plate; and somehow it always comes between me and this governing business. I think I know what you'll reply to this; and in order that you may have full justification for abusing me, I will own that the other day, when I said to Tittikins, "Now, dear, if you put your hands inside your cup of milk again, I must really punish you," that little three-year-old replied, in the *chirp-est* voice, "No, you won't! I know better." And one day, when I *really* shut my teeth together, and with a great throb of martyrdom, spanked the back of that dear little hand, she fixed her great, soft, brown, unwinking eyes on me, and said, "I'm brave – I don't mind it!" You can see for yourself that this practical application of the story of the Spartan boy and the fox, which I had told her the day before, was rather unexpected.

Tittikins has no idea of "the rule that won't work both ways." Not long since, she wanted my pen and ink, which, for obvious reasons, I declined giving. She acquiesced, apparently, and went on with her play. Shortly after, I said, "Tittikins, bring me that

newspaper, will you?" "No," she replied, with Lilliputian dignity. "If you can't please me, I can't please you." The other day she was making an ear-splitting racket with some brass buttons, in a tin box, when I said, "Can't you play with something else, dear, till I have done writing?" "But I like this best," she replied. "It makes my head ache, though," I said. "You poor dear, you," said Tittikins, patronizingly, as she threw the obnoxious plaything down, and rushed across the room to put her arms around my neck – "you *poor* dear, you, of tourse I won't do it, then."

I have given it up; with shame and confusion of face, I own that child *governs me*. I know her *heart* is all right; I know there's not a grain of *badness* in her; I know she would die to-day, if she hadn't those few flaws to keep her alive. In short, she's *my grandchild*. Isn't that enough?

But all this does not prevent my giving sensible advise to others. Now I am perfectly well aware, that there comes a time in the life of every little child, how beautiful, winning and pleasant soever it may be, when it hoists with its tiny hand the rebel flag of defiance to authority. You may walk round another way, and choose not to see it, and fancy you will have no farther trouble. You may hug to your heart all its sweet cunning ways, and say – after all, what does it matter? it is but a child; it knows no better; it will outgrow all that; it is best not to notice it; I can't bear to be harsh with it; it will be a great deal of trouble to fight it out, should the child happen to be persistent: it is a matter of no consequence; and such like sophistries. I say you may try in this

way to dodge a question that has got some time or other to be met fair and square in the face; and you may persuade yourself, all the while, that you are thus loving your own ease, that you are loving your child; but both it and you, will at some future day see the terrible mistake.

"Oh, why did my father, or my mother, *let* me do thus and so?" has been the anguished cry of many a shame-stricken man and woman whose parents reasoned after this manner.

Now, the point at issue between the child and yourself may seem trifling. It may be very early in its life that it is made. Perhaps scarcely past the baby age, it may insist, when well and healthy, upon being sung or rocked in the arms to sleep, and that by some one particular person. Now, you are perfectly sure this is unnecessary, and that it would be much better for the child, apart from the inconvenience of the practice, to be laid quietly in its bed, with only some trustful person to watch it. But you reason, it has always been used to this, and I may have to hear it cry every night for a week before I can teach it. Well – and what then? The child, to be good for anything, must be taught some time or other that it cannot gain its point by crying. Why not now? Of course it should not be placed in bed till it is sufficiently weary; nor should it be frightened at being left in a dark room alone, or left alone at all, while the trial is being made. This attended to, if it cry – let it cry. It will be a struggle of two or three nights and no more; perhaps not that; and the moral lesson is learned; after that obedience comes easy.

It is a mistake to suppose, you who are so greedy of a child's love, that it is more attached to that person who indulges its every whim, than to the one who can firmly pronounce the monosyllable no, when necessary. The most brutal word I ever heard spoken, was from a grown man to a widowed mother, who belonged to that soul-destroying class of parents who "could never deny a child anything" and whose whole life had been one slavish endeavor to gratify his every whim without regard to her own preferences or inclination; and whenever you see such a man, you may know he had just such a mother; or, having one wiser, that her attempts at government had been neutralized by one of the don't-cry-dear-and-you-shall-have-it fathers. It is so strange that parents who crave to be so fondly remembered by their children in after years, should be thus short-sighted. It is so strange, that when they desire next to this, that everybody else should consider their children supremely lovely and winning, that they should take so direct a method to render them perfectly disagreeable. Strange that they should never reflect that some poor wife, in the future, will rue the day she ever married that selfish, domineering tyrant, now in embryo in that little boy. Strange that the mother of that blue-eyed little girl never thinks that the latter may curse her own daughter with that same passionate temper, which never knew paternal restraint. Stranger still, that parents launching these little voyagers on the wide ocean of time, without chart, rudder, or compass, should, when in after days they suffer total shipwreck, close the doors of their

hearts, and homes, in their shamed and sorrowful faces.

I think there is nothing on earth so lovely as the first waking of a little child in the morning. The gleeful, chirping voice. The bright eye. The lovely rose-tint of the cheek. The perfect happiness – the perfect faith in all future to-morrows!

We who have lain our heads on our pillows so often, with great sorrows for company; who have tossed, and turned, and writhed, and counted the lagging hours, and prayed even for the briefest respite in forgetfulness; who have mercifully slept at last, and our dead have come back to us, with their smiles and their love, strong enough to cover any shortcomings of ours. We who have awoke in the morning, with a sharp shuddering cry at the awful reality, and closed our eyes again wearily upon the sweet morning light, and the song of birds, and the scent of flowers, every one of which have given us pangs keener than death; we who have risen, and with a dead, dull weight at the heart, moved about mechanically like one walking in sleep, through the gray, colorless treadmill routine of to-day, a wonder to ourselves; – ah! with what infinite love and pity do we look upon the blithe waking of the little child! As it leaps trustfully into our arms, with its morning caress and its soft cheek to our face, how hard it is sometimes to keep the eyes from overflowing with the pent-up pain of the slow years. Oh, the sweet beguilement of that caress! The trustful, lisping question, which shames us out of our tears, for that which tears may never bring back. The unconscious bits of wisdom stammeringly voiced, and left disjointed, and

half expressed, in favor of some childish quip or prank of the moment, which makes us doubt whether we have most sage or most baby before us. The saucy little challenge "to play!"

We play? We swallow a great sob and get obediently down on the carpet to "build block-houses;" and when the little one laughs, as the tall structure reels, and topples, and finally falls over, and merrily stands there, showing the little white teeth, clapping hands, and peeping into our faces, and says reproachfully, "What are you thinking about? Why don't *you* laugh?" – we thank God she has so long a time before she finds out that grieving "*why*." We thank God that deep and keen as the child is at one moment, she is so ridiculously butter-fly-ish the next.

And then, at its bidding, we set up the chairs and tables in the baby-house, and locate the numerous families of dolls, in cradles and beds, and in parlors; and answer the mimic questions about how "live people" keep house; and play "doctor," and play "nurse," and "play have them die," and see them twitched out of bed five minutes after they have departed this life, to be dressed for a party. And in spite of ourselves, we laugh at the absurd whimsicalities carried out with such adult earnestness and gravity.

And yet there are people in the world who don't see a child's mission in a household; who look upon it as a doll to be dressed, or an animal to be fed, or a nuisance to be kept out of sight as much as possible. Heaven bless us, when no other voice or touch or presence can be borne, a child is often the unconscious Saviour

who whispers to the troubled elements of the soul, "Peace, be still!"

Has it ever happened to you that life's contrasts were so sharply presented, that you were smitten with shamed pain at being housed, and clad, and fed, and comfortable, as if you had been guilty of a great wrong, or injustice, that should be immediately wiped out.

Soon after a deep fall of snow, when fleet horses were flying in all directions to the tune of merry bells, and the sharp, crisp air was like wine to the fur-robed riders, I saw a little creature, muffled to the tip of her pretty nose by the careful hand of love, led down the steps of a nice house, to a little gaily-painted sleigh, with cushioned seat, and pretty bells, and soft, warm wrappings, to take her first ride in the new present "Santa-Claus" had brought her. Three grown persons were in waiting, to see that she was lifted gently in, and tucked up, and her hands and feet comfortably bestowed, before starting on this, her first sleigh-ride. Her bright eyes sparkled with delight, her voice was merrier than the bells, and the bright rose of her cheek told of warmth and happiness and plenty. Just three years old: and as far as *she* had ever known, *life was all just like that*. Just at that minute came along another little creature, also just three years old, and stood by the side of the gaily-painted little sleigh, looking at its laughing little occupant. *Her* face was blue and pinched. A ragged handkerchief was tied over her tangled brown hair. *Her* thin cotton dress scarce covered the little purple knees. *Her* blue,

small fingers held the inevitable beggar's basket, and the shawl for which the cold wind was contending, left her little breast and shoulders quite bare. And there she stood, and gazed at her happier little sister. Merciful Heaven! the horrible contrast, the terrible mystery of it! Only three years of her sad life gone! So *much* of this to endure! and so much still more dreadful that "three years" could not *yet* dream of. What had the one child more than the other done, that each should stand – one with steady, one with tottering feet – on either side of that dreadful gulf, eying one another in that guileless, silent way, more terrible to witness than pen of mine can ever tell?

Well, the little painted sleigh slid away with its merry freight, and "three years old" stood still and looked after it. She could not comprehend, had she been told, the sad thoughts that sent down the shower of pennies from the window above on her little beggar's basket. But she looked up and said, timidly, "Thank you," with a shy, little happy smile, as she scrambled them up out of the snow at her feet. Poor, little baby! – for she was nothing more. And there are hundreds just like her in New York. There's the pity of it. Your *men* beggars don't fret me, unless crippled. If a *woman* can earn an honest living in the face of so many society and custom-dragons, surely a *man* ought, or starve. But these babies – oh! it is dreadful. And the more pitiful you are to them, the harder their lot is; since the more *substantial* pity they excite, the more profitable they become to the callous wretches who live by it.

And after all, these two little "three years old" may yet change places. God knows. Often I meet, in my walks, a lady elegantly apparelled – sometimes in her own carriage, sometimes walking – who once stood shivering at area doors, like that little owner of the beggar's basket —*now* an honored and happy wife and mother. They don't *all* go down – down – as inexorable time grinds on. Still the exceptions are so rare, unless they are snatched away by the sheltering arms of death, or love, before pollution becomes indelible, that they are easily counted.

Back comes the gay little sleigh and the rosy "three years old!" Now she is taken carefully into the house, and some warm milk prepared for her, and slippers are warmed for her feet, and her face covered with kisses; and playthings, which are legion, spread before her; and the whole house is on its knees, listening to her prattle, and rejoicing in her presence, that fills the house like the perfume of a sweet flower, like the warm rays of the sun, like the song of a bird. And the other? Read this from the daily paper: "Yesterday, a little beggar-girl, three years old, was run over by the street-car, at – street, while attempting to cross, and instantly killed." Better so. One short pang, and all the suffering over.

Walking behind a father and his prattling child – a fairy little girl – the other day, I heard a bit of human nature. "I mean to have a tea-party," lisped the little thing; "a tea-party, papa." "Do you?" said the father; "Well, whom shall you invite?" "I shan't ask anybody who don't have tea at *their* houses," replied the little woman. "There's worldly wisdom," thought we, "in pantalettes.

So young and so calculating!" We smiled – who could help it? – at the little mite; but we sighed, also. We would rather have heard those infantile lips say: "I shall ask everybody who *don't* have tea at their houses," – not as a mocking-bird or parrot would say it, as a lesson taught, but because it was the out-gushing of a warm little unspoiled heart. That child but echoed, probably, what she had listened to unobserved, from mamma's lips, on the eve of some party or dinner. The child who sits playing with its doll, be it remembered, oh mothers, is not always deaf, dumb, and blind to what is passing around, though it may seem so. The seed dropped carelessly then, may take root, and develop into a tree, under whose withering influence your every earthly hope shall perish.

Sometimes one thinks what a pity children should ever grow up. The other day, passing through an entry of one of our public buildings, I saw two little boys, of the ages of six and eight, with their arms about each other's neck, exchanging kiss after kiss. It was such a pretty sight, in that noisy den of business, that one could but stop to look. The younger of the children, noticing this, looked up with such a heaven of love in his face, and said, in explanation, "*he is my brother!*" Pity they should ever grow up, thought we, as we passed along. Pity that the world, with its clashing interests of business, love, and politics, should ever come between them. Pity that they should ever coldly exchange finger-tips, or, more wretched still, not even exchange glances. Pity that one should sorrow, and grieve, and hunger, and

thirst, and yearn for sympathy, while the other should sleep, and eat, and drink, unmindful of his fate. Pity that one with meek-folded hands should pass into the land of silence, and no tear of repentance and affection fall upon his marble face from the eyes of his "brother." Such things have been. That is why we thought, pity they should ever grow up! – "*Heaven lies so near us in our infancy.*"

WOMEN AND THEIR DISCONTENTS

A GENTLEMAN asked me the other day, "Why are the women of the present day so discontented with their lot?" Now there was no denying the fact, staring, as it does, from every page of "women's books," peeping out under the flimsy veil of a jest in their conversation, or boldly challenging your attention in some rasping sarcasm, according to the taste or humor of the writer or speaker. "Men *can't* be such devils as these women seem to suppose," said a gentleman anxious for the credit of his sex; "and women ought to be able to fulfill the duties of wives and mothers without such constant complaint. Now my grandmother" – Here I laid a finger on his lip. Do you know, said I, that you have this very minute, to use a slang phrase – unladylike, perhaps, but expressive – do you know that you have this very minute "put your foot in it?" Do you know that if there is anything in the world that makes a woman discontented and discouraged, it is to have some piece of ossified female perfection, in the shape of a relative, held up to her imitation by her husband – some woman, with chalk and water in her veins, instead of blood, who is "good" merely because she is *petrified*? Now, how would a man like his wife constantly to remind him of the very superior manner in which her grandfather conducted his business matters? how

superior to his was his way of book-keeping, and of managing his various clerks and subordinates? how like clockwork he always arranged everything? – and suppose she says this, too, at moments when her husband had done his very best to be true to his duties. I wonder how long before he would exclaim, Oh, bother your grandfather; he did business *his* way, and I shall do my business mine.

Now you see how I have lost patience, as well as what I was going to say, by the vision of your grandmother, sir. What I was going to remark when you interrupted me, was this: that, in my opinion, the root of all this discontent is the prevailing physical inability of women to face the inevitable cares and duties of married life. Added to this, the want of magnanimity and *unwisdom* that men show, in lifting the eyebrow of indifference, or ill-disguised vexation, when the very fragility they fell in love with, staggers and falls under the burdens of life. Now were these husbands about to possess a horse, they would consider first whether they wanted a farm-horse or a fancy horse – a working animal or an ornamental one. Having chosen the latter, they would be very careful to choose a carriage of *light weight* for it to draw, and not finding one sufficiently light, would be very apt to have one manufactured on purpose, rather than run the risk of overtaking the animal's powers. They would treat him carefully, feed him well, see that he rested sufficiently when weary; pat him, coax him, instead of lashing and goading him, when, for some unknown reason, his steps seemed to falter. Now is a man's

wife of less consequence than his horse? Is it less necessary he should stop to consider, before he marries her, *why* he wants her? and having settled that question, make his choice accordingly, after having also considered what means are at his disposal to carry out his intentions as to their mutual comfort? In old times, many men married only to get their butter churned, their cheese made, their clothes mended, and their meals prepared, their wives raising pigs and children in the intervals. By this humanitarian process, all that was left of a wife at thirty, was a horn-comb, inserted in six hairs, on the top of her head, and a figure resembling the letter C. The men of the present day seemed to have learned no better how to *husband* their wives. Their eye is caught by a pretty pink-and-white creature, who steps about gracefully and gleefully in her father's comfortable, well-appointed house. They never consider *has she good health? Will she make a healthy Mother?* nor the good sense to turn resolutely away, and say, it would be cruelty in me to take her feeble prettiness from that warmly lined nest, to a home in the performance of whose duties she would inevitably break down. Nor do they say, when they have made the irretrievable mistake of marrying her, and find this weary, discouraged little woman crying over it, "Poor child, I ought to have foreseen all this, but as I didn't, I must love and comfort you all the more." Not a bit of it. The more they have been to blame, the more they blame *her*, and point with exacting finger to that horrid, stereotyped piece of perfection, "*my grandmother*." Then they prate to her about

patience – "Job's patience." Now if there is a proverb that needs re-vamping, it is "*The patience of Job*." In the first place, Job *wasn't* patient. Like all the rest of his sex, from that day to the present, he could be heroic only for a little while at a time. He *began* bravely; but ended, as most of them do under annoyance, by cursing and swearing. Patient as Job! Did Job ever try, when he was hungry, to eat shad with a frisky baby in his lap? Did Job ever, after nursing one all night, and upon taking his seat at the breakfast-table the morning after, pour out coffee for six people, and second cups after that, before he had a chance to take a mouthful himself? Pshaw! I've no patience with "Job's patience." It is of no use to multiply instances; but there's not a faithful house-mother in the land who does not out-distance him in the sight of men and angels, every hour in the twenty-four.

Think of the case of our farmers' wives. Now, just consider it a little. Next to being a minister's wife, I think I should dread being the wife of a farmer. Sometimes, indeed, the terms are synonymous. Raising children and chickens, *ad infinitum*; making butter, cheese, bread, and the national and omnipresent pie; cutting, making and mending the clothes for a whole household, not to speak of doing their washing and ironing; taking care of the pigs and the vegetable garden; making winter-apple sauce by the barrel, and pickling myriads of cucumbers; drying fruits and herbs; putting all the twins through the measles, whooping-cough, mumps, scarlet-fever and chicken-pox; besides keeping a perpetual river of hot grease on the kitchen table, in

which is to float potatoes, carrots, onions and turnips for the ravenous maws of the "farm-hands."

No wonder that the poor things look harassed, jaded and toil-worn, long before they arrive at middle age. No wonder that a life so hard and angular, should obliterate all the graces of femininity – when no margin is left, year after year, for those little refinements which a woman under any pressure of circumstances, naturally and rightly desires, and lacking which, she is inevitably unhappy and coarsened.

Now your farmer is a round, stalwart, comfortable animal. There is no baby wailing at *his* pantaloons while he ploughs or makes fences. *He* lies down under the nearest tree and rests, or sleeps, when he can no longer work with profit. He comes in to his dinner with the appetite of a hyena, and the digestion of a rhinoceros, and goes forth again to the hayfield till called home to supper. *There* is his wife, and too often with the same frowsy head with which she rose in the morning, darting hither and thither for whatever is wanted, or helping the hungry, children or the farm-hands. After the supper is finished come the dish-washing, and milking, and the thought for to-morrow's breakfast; and then perhaps all night she sleeps with one eye open for a baby or a sick child, and rises again to pursue the same unrelieved, treadmill, wearing round, the next day.

Now the uppermost idea in the minds of too many farmers is, *how to get the greatest possible amount of work out of their wives*. A poorer policy than this can scarcely be. They treat their

cattle better. If they are about to be presented with a fine calf or colt, they take pains that the prospective mother is well cared for, both before and after the event. The farmer who would not do this would be considered extremely short-sighted. Their cattle are not allowed to be overworked, or underfed, or abused in any way. Now, pray, is not a farmer's wife as valuable an animal as a cow, or a horse, even looking at the practical side of it? Is it not as important to have a sound, healthy mother of children, as to have a healthy mare or cow? You may say that no woman should marry a farmer, who does not *expect to work*. I say, in reply, that woman was never intended to split or carry wood, or to carry heavy pails or buckets of water. And yet how many farmers can we count who ever think of the women of the house, in regard to the distance or proximity of the wood or the water to the kitchen? while too many grudge to these overworked women that labor-saving apparatus in every department of their work, which would prolong their lives years, to a family of growing children. Then, to grudge such an industrious wife decent raiment, wherewith to make herself and her children neat and comfortable, is a shame. To oblige *such* a woman to plead like a beggar for the dollar she has earned a thousand times over *in any family but his own*, should make him blush. Look at our farmers' wives all over the land, and see if, with rare exceptions, their toil-worn, harassed faces do not indorse my statement. Every mother should have time to *talk* with her children – to acquaint herself with their souls as well as their bodies – to do something besides wash their

faces and clothes. And how are these hurried, weary women to find it? Of what avail is it to those children who *come up*, but who are not *brought up*, that another meadow, or another barn, is added to the family inheritance, when the grass waves over the mother's tombstone before their childhood and youth is past? or when they can remember her only as a fretted, querulous, care-burdened, over-tasked creature, who was always jostling them out of the way to catch up some burden which she dare not drop, though she drop by the way herself.

Sunday, "the Day of Rest," so called, to many mothers of families, is the most toilsome day of the whole week. Children, too young to go to church, must of course be cared for at home; domestics on that day, of all others, expect their liberty. The father of the family, also, in many cases, thinks it hard if, after a week's labor, he too cannot roam *without* his family; never remembering that his wife, for the same reason, needs rest equally with himself, instead of shouldering on that day a double burden. Weary with family cares, she remembers the good word of cheer to which she has in days gone by listened from some clergyman, not too library-read to remember that he was *human*. The good, sympathetic word that sent her home strengthened for another week's duties. The good word, which men think they can do without; but which women, with the petty be-littling every day annoyances of their monotonous life, long for, as does a tired child to lay its head on its mother's breast. A mother may feel thus and yet have no desire to evade the responsible duties of her

office. Indeed, had she not often her oratory in her own heart, she would sink discouraged oftener than she does, lacking the human sympathy which is often withheld by those upon whom she has the nearest claim for it. To such a woman it is not a mere form to "go to church;" it is not to her a fashion exchange; she *really* desires the spiritual help she seeks. *You* may find nothing in the words that come to her like the cool hand on the fevered brow. The psalm which is discord to your ear, may soothe her, like a mother's murmured lullaby. The prayer, which to you is an offence, brings her face to face with One who is touched by our infirmities. If an "undevout astronomer is mad," it seems to me that an undevout woman is still more so. Our insane asylums are full of women, who, leaning on some human heart for love and sympathy, and meeting only misappreciation, have gone there, past the Cross, where alone they could have laid down burdens too heavy to bear unshared. A great book is unwritten on this theme. When men become less gross and unspiritual than they now are, they will see the great wrong of which they are guilty, in their impatience of women's keenest sufferings because they "are only mental."

Ladies, many of you attempt too much. I am convinced that there are times in everybody's experience when there is so much to be done, that the only way to do it is to sit down and do nothing. This sounds paradoxical, but it is not. For instance: the overtasked mother of a family, in moderate circumstances, who must be brains, hands, stomach and feet for a dozen little

children, and their father, who counts full another dozen. Do the best she may, plan the wisest she may, her work accumulates fearfully on her hands. One day's labor laps over on the next, till she cannot sleep at night for fear she shall oversleep in the morning. And though she works hard all day, and gives herself no relaxation, she cannot see any result at the close, save that she "hath done what she could." Of course you say, let her be satisfied with that, and not worry about it. That is only another proof how easy it is for some people to bear the troubles of *other* people. Suppose her nervous system has been strained to the utmost, so that every step is a weariness, and every fresh and unexpected demand sets her "all of a tremble," as women express it, what is the use of reasoning then about not working? The more she can't work, the more she will try to, till she drops in her tracks, unless, catching sight of her prospective coffin, she stops in time. Now there are self-sacrificing mothers who need somebody to say to them, "Stop! you have just to make your choice now, between death and life. You have expended all the strength you have on hand – and must lay in a new stock before any more work can be done by you. So don't go near your kitchen; if your cook goes to sleep in the sink on washing-day, let her; if your chambermaid spends the most of her time on ironing-day with the grocer-boy in the area, don't *you* know anything about it. Get right into bed, and lie there, just as a man would do if he didn't feel one quarter as bad as you do; and ring every bell in the house, every five minutes, for everything you want,

or think you want; and my word for it, the world will keep on going round just the same, as if you were spinning a spasmodic tee-totum, as hens do, long after their heads have been cut off. Yes – just lie there till you get rested; and they all find out, by picking up the burdens you have dropped, what a load you have been uncomplainingly shouldering. Yes – just lie there; and tell them to bring you something nice to eat and drink – yes, *drink*; and forbid, under dreadful penalties, anybody asking you what the family are to have for dinner. Let them eat what they like, so that they don't trouble you, and season it to their tastes; and here's hoping it will do them good."

And now having located you comfortably under the quilt, out of harm's way, let me tell you that if you think you are doing God service, or anybody else, by using up a year's strength in a week, you have made a sinful mistake. I don't care anything about that basket of unmended stockings, or unmade pinafores, or any other nursery nightmare which haunts the dreams of these "Martha" mothers. You have but one life to live, that's plain; and when you are dead, all the king's men can't make you stand on your feet again, that's plain. Well, then – don't be dead. In the first place, go out a part of every day, rain or shine, for the fresh air, and don't tell me you can't; at least not while you can stop to embroider your children's clothes. As to "dressing to go out," don't dress. If you are clean and whole, that's enough; have boots with elastics at the side, instead of those long mile Balmorals that take so long to "lace up," – in short, *simplify your dressing*, and

then stop every wheel in the house if necessary in order to go out, but go; fifteen minutes is better than nothing; if you can't get out in the day-time, run out in the evening; and if your husband can't see the necessity of it, perhaps he will on reflection after you have gone out. The moral of all which is, that if nobody else will take care of you, you must just take care of yourself. As to the children – I might write a long book on this head, or those heads, bless 'em! They can't help being born, poor things, though they often get slapped for that, and nothing else, as far as I can see. It is a pity you hadn't three instead of six, so that the care of them might be a pleasure instead of a weariness; but "that's none of my business," as people say after they have been unusually meddlesome and impertinent. Still I repeat it, I wish you *had* three instead of six, and I don't care if you *do* go and tell John.

Women can relieve their minds, now-a-days, in one way that was formerly denied them: they can write! a woman who wrote, used to be considered a sort of monster – At this day it is difficult to find one who does not write, or has not written, or who has not, at least, a strong desire to do so. Gridirons and darning-needles are getting monotonous. A part of their time the women of to-day are content to devote to their consideration when necessary; but you will rarely find one – at least among women who *think*– who does not silently rebel against allowing them a monopoly.

What? you inquire, would you encourage, in the present overcrowded state of the literary market, any more women scribblers? Stop a bit. It does not follow that she should wish or

seek to give to the world what she has written. I look around and see innumerable women, to whose barren, loveless life this would be improvement and solace, and I say to them, write! Write, if it will make that life brighter, or happier, or less monotonous. Write! it will be a safe outlet for thoughts and feelings, that maybe the nearest friend you have, has never dreamed had place in your heart and brain. You should have read the letters I have received; you should have talked with the women I have talked with; in short, you should have walked this earth with your eyes open, instead of shut, as far as its women are concerned, to indorse this advice. Nor do I qualify what I have said on account of social position, or age, or even education. It is not *safe* for the women of 1868 to shut down so much that cries out for sympathy and expression, because life is such a maelstrom of business or folly, or both, that those to whom they have bound themselves, body and soul, recognize only the needs of the former. *Let them write* if they will. One of these days, when that diary is found, when the hand that penned it shall be dust, with what amazement and remorse will many a husband, or father, exclaim, I never knew my wife, or my child, till this moment; all these years she has sat by my hearth, and slumbered by my side, and I have been a stranger to her. And you sit there, and you read sentence after sentence, and recall the day, the month, the week, when she moved calmly, and you thought happily, or, at least, contentedly, about the house, all the while her heart was aching, when a kind word from you, or even a touch of your hand upon her head,

as you passed out to business, or pleasure, would have cheered her, oh so much! When had you sat down by her side after the day's work for both was over, and talked with her just a few moments of something besides the price of groceries, and the number of shoes Tommy had kicked out, all of which, proper and necessary in their place, need not of necessity form the staple of conversation between a married pair; had you done this; had you recognized that she had a *soul* as well as yourself, how much sunshine you might have thrown over her colorless life!

"Perhaps, sir," you reply; "but I have left my wife far behind in the region of thought. It would only distress her to do this!" How do you know that? And if it were so, are you content to leave her – the mother of your children – so far behind? *Ought* you to do it? Should you not, by raising the self-respect you have well nigh crushed by your indifference and neglect, extend a manly hand to her help? *I* think so. The pink cheeks which first won you may have faded, but remember that it was in your service, when you quietly accept the fact that "you have left your wife far behind you in mental improvement." Oh! it is pitiable this growing apart of man and wife, for lack of a little generous consideration and magnanimity! It is pitiable to see a husband without a thought that he might and should occasionally, have given his wife a lift out of the petty, harrowing details of her woman's life, turn from her, in company, to address his conversation to some woman who, happier than she, has had time and opportunity for mental culture. You do not see, sir – you will not see – you do not desire

to see, how her cheek flushes, and her eye moistens, and her heart sinks like lead as you thus wound her self-respect. You think her "cross and ill-natured," if when, the next morning, you converse with her on the price of butter, she answers you listlessly and with a total want of interest in the treadmill-subject.

I say to such women: Write! Rescue a part of each week at least for reading, and putting down on paper, for your own private benefit, your thoughts and feelings. Not for the *world's* eye, unless you choose, but to lift yourselves out the dead-level of your lives; to keep off inanition; to lessen the number who are yearly added to our lunatic asylums from the ranks of misappreciated, unhappy womanhood, narrowed by lives made up of details. Fight it! oppose it, for your own sakes and your children's! Do not be *mentally* annihilated by it. It is all very well to sneer at this and raise the old cry of "a woman's sphere being home" – which, by the way, you hear oftenest from men whose home is only a place to feed and sleep in. You might as well say that a man's sphere is his shop or his counting-room. How many of them, think you, would be contented, year in and year out, to eat, drink, and sleep as well as to transact business there, and *never desire or take*, at all costs, some let-up from its monotonous grind? How many would like to forego the walk to and from the place of business? forego the opportunities for conversation, which chance thus throws in their way, with other men bent on the same or other errands? Have, literally, *no* variety in their lives? Oh, if you could be a woman but one year and try it! A woman – but not necessarily a

butterfly – not necessarily a machine, which, once wound up by the marriage ceremony, is expected to click on with undeviating monotony till Death stops the hands.

I am often asked the question, "Do I believe that women should vote?" Most assuredly. I am heart and soul with the women-speakers and lecturers, and workers in public and private, who are trying to bring this thing about. I have heard and read all the pros and cons on this subject; and I have never yet heard, or read, any argument in its *disfavor*, which is worth considering by whomsoever uttered, or written. Everything must have a beginning, and no noble enterprise was ever yet undertaken that did not find its objectors and assailants. That is to be expected. These women-pioneers are prepared for this. It is not pleasant, to be sure, to see those men in their audiences, who should give them a hearty, manly support, making flippant, foolish, shallow remarks on the subject; or thanking God that *their* wives and daughters are not "mixed up in it." Meantime their wives and daughters may be "mixed up" in many things much less to their credit, and much more to the detriment of their relations as mothers and wives. And when I hear a woman making fun of this subject, or languidly declaring that, for her part, she wouldn't give a fig to vote, and she is only glad enough to be rid of the whole bothering thing, I feel only pity, that in this glorious year of our Lord, 1869, she should still prefer going back to the dark ages. I feel only pity, that, torpidly and selfishly content with her ribbons and dresses, she may never see or think of those other

women, who may be lifted out of their wretched condition, of low wages and starvation, by this very lever of power.

As to the principal objection urged against voting, I think a woman may vote and yet be a refined, and lady-like, and intelligent person, and worthy of all respect from those who hold womanhood in the highest estimation. I think she may go to the ballot-box without receiving contamination, just as I believe that she may walk in the public thoroughfares, and pass the most desperate characters, of both sexes, without a spot on her spiritual raiment. Nay, more – I believe that *through her* the ballot-box is to become regenerated. Nor do I believe that any man, educated or uneducated, unless under the influence of liquor, would in any way make that errand a disagreeable one to her. You tell me, but they *are* under that influence more or less on election day. Very well – the remedy for that is in closing the liquor-shops till it is over.

As to women "voting as their husbands tell them," I have my own opinion, which I think results would prove to be correct. I think, for instance, that no wife of a drunkard would vote that any drunkard should hold office, howsoever her husband himself might vote, or tell her to vote. Then, why is it any worse for a *woman* "to vote as she is bid," than for an ignorant *male* voter to vote as he is bid. And as to the "soil and stain on woman's purity," which timidity, and conservatism, and selfishness insists shall follow the act, it might be well, in answer, to draw aside the veil from many homes in New York, *not* in the vicinity of the Five

Points either, where long-suffering, uncomplaining wives and mothers, endure a defilement and brutality on legal compulsion, to which this, at the worst estimate ever made by its opponents, would be spotlessness itself. No – no. Not one, or all of these reasons together, is the *true* reason for this opposition; and what is more, not one, or all of these reasons together, will *eventually* prevent women from having the franchise. It is only a question of time; that's one comfort.

WOMEN AND SOME OF THEIR MISTAKES

BUT, then, it is not altogether the fault of men, that women have so poor a time in this world.

If I had a boy, my chief aim would be to make him yield to his sisters. Why? *Because* so many boys have been taught a contrary lesson; their selfishness every day growing stronger and stronger, till the day when they marry some woman, who is expected to "fall into line" – toes out, head erect, shoulders squared – at the word of command, like their sisters. It is a very common thing to hear a mother say to her daughters, you must do this, or that, or omit doing this, or that, or some day you will cause the unhappiness of the man you marry. When was a parent ever known to say this to a *boy* about his future wife? The idea, I have no doubt, would be considered quite ludicrous. But I have yet to learn why it is not as necessary in one case as in the other. Now, to oblige the girls of a family to be punctual to their meals, on penalty of displeasure, and cold food, and to save a warm breakfast for the *boy*, whenever he chooses to lie in bed an hour or two later than the rest of the family, is making a fatal mistake, so far as the boy is concerned, and educating a selfish husband for some unfortunate girl who may be entrapped by him. *Then* this foolish mother will be the very first to lament

to her circle of sympathizing friends, that "*her* John" should have married a woman who is so exacting and unyielding. *Then*, these sisters will mourn publicly that dear "John" should have made such a terrible matrimonial blunder as to marry a woman who was not enamored of mending his stockings every evening in the week, which he spent out doors, in any kind of amusement that the whim of the hour suggested. *Then*— aunts, and cousins, and uncles, of the hundredth degree, will join and swell the chorus, till "dear John," if he has not sense enough to see the discrepancy between their preaching and their practice, as exemplified in their exactions towards their own husbands, will believe himself entitled to honorable mention in "Fox's Book of Martyrs."

The evil, I have said, *begins* with the boy's home education. "Sister" must mend his gloves and stockings, and alter his shirts, whenever he wishes; but "brother" may altogether decline waiting upon his sisters to evening visits, or amusements, in favor of other ladies, or may, in any other way, show his utter selfishness and disregard of their natural claims upon him.

This is all wrong, and boys so brought up must of necessity resist, when matrimony presents any other side of the question than that of blind, unswerving obedience.

Now, imagine this selfishness intensified a thousand fold by solitary years of bachelorhood, and you have a creature to whom "The Happy Family" would forever be a myth.

Perhaps you think that I imagine selfishness to be peculiarly the vice of the other sex. Not at all. There are women who are

most disgustingly selfish; wives and mothers unworthy both these titles; but I shall find you ten selfish husbands to one selfish wife, and therefore I call the attention of parents to this part of their sons' education. If half the admonitions bestowed so lavishly upon girls were addressed to their brothers, the family estate and the public would be the gainers.

There is one class of women that in my opinion need extinguishing. I think I hear some male voice exclaim, *One?* I wish there were not a great many! Sir! know that the foolishlest woman who was ever born is better than most men; but I am not treating of that branch of the subject now. As I was about to remark, there is a class of sentimental women who use up the whole dictionary in speaking of a pin, and circumlocute about the alphabet in such a way, every time they open their mincing lips, that nobody but themselves can know what they are talking about, and truth to say, I should have been safe not to admit even that exception. Their "*ske-iy*" must always be heavenly "*ble-u;*" to touch household matters with so much as the end of a taper finger would be "*beneneath* them," and that though Astor may have considerable more money in the bank than themselves. To sweep, to dust, to make a bed, to look into a kitchen-closet, to superintend a dinner – was a woman made for that? they indignantly exclaim. Now, while I as indignantly deny that she was born with a gridiron round her neck, I repudiate the idea that any one of these duties is beneath any woman, if it be necessary or best that she should perform them. I could count

you a dozen women on my fingers' ends, whom the reading world has delighted to honor, who held no such flimsy, sickly, hot-house views as these. Because a woman can appreciate a good book, or even write one, or talk or think intelligently, is she not to be a breezy, stirring, wide-awake, efficient, thorough, capable housekeeper? Is she not to be a soulful wife and a loving, judicious mother? Is she to disdain to comb a little tumbled head, or to wash a pair of sticky little paws, or to mend a rent in a pinafore or little pair of trousers? I tell you there's a false ring about women who talk that way. No woman of true intellect ever felt such duties *beneath* her. She may like much better to read an interesting book, or write out her own thoughts when she feels the inspiration, than to be *much* employed this way, but she will never, never disdain it, and she will faithfully stand at her post if there can be no responsible relief-guard. You will never find her sentimentally whining about moonshine, while her neglected children are running loose in the neighbors' houses, or through the streets. You may be sure she is the wrong sort of woman who does this; she has neither head enough to attain to that which she is counterfeiting, nor heart enough really to care for the children she has so thoughtlessly launched upon the troubled sea of life. I sincerely believe that there are few women with a desire for intellectual improvement, who cannot secure it if they will. To be honest, they find plenty of time to put no end of embroidery on their children's clothes; plenty of time to keep up the neck-and-neck race of fashion, though it may be in third-rate imitations.

They will sit up till midnight, but they will trim a dress or bonnet in the latest style, if they cannot hire it done, when the same energy would, if they felt inclined, furnish the *inside* of their heads much more profitably; for mark you, these women who are above household cares will run their feet off to match a trimming, or chase down a coveted color in a ribbon. *That* isn't "belittling!" *That* isn't "trivial!" *That* isn't "beneath them!"

It is very funny how such women will fancy they are recommending themselves by this kind of talk, to persons whose approbation they sometimes seek. If they only knew what a sensible, rational person may be thinking about while they are patiently but politely listening to such befogged nonsense; how pity is dominant where they suppose admiration to be the while; how the listener longs to break out and say, My dear woman, *I* have washed and ironed, and baked and brewed, and swept and dusted, and washed children, and made bonnets, and cut and made dresses, and mended old coats, and cleaned house, and made carpets, and nailed them down, and cleaned windows, and washed dishes, and tended the door-bell, and done every "menial" thing you can think of, when it came to me to do, and I'm none the worse for it, though perhaps you would not have complimented my "intellect," as you call it, had you known it. Lord bless me! there's nothing like one's *own* hands and feet. Bells are very good institutions when one is sick, but I never found that person who, when I had the use of my feet, could do a thing as quick as myself, and as a general thing the more you

pay them the slower they move; and as I'm of the comet order, I quite forget it is "*beneath me*" to do things, till I've done them. So you see, after all, so far as I am concerned, it is no great credit to me, although it *is* very shocking to know that a woman who writes isn't always dressed in sky blue, and employed in smelling a violet.

Then there is another subject to which I wish women would give a little consideration; and that is the reason for the decline of the good old-fashioned hospitality. I think the abolition of the good old "tea" of our ancestors has a great deal to do with it, and the prevalent and absurd idea that hospitality is not hospitality, unless indorsed by a French cook, and a brown-stone front. Now, *dinner* takes the place of this meal. Dinner! which involves half a dozen courses, with dessert and wines to match. That is an affair which requires the close supervision of the wife and mother of the family, even though she may have a cook well-skilled, and attendants well-drilled. Now, as most American wives and mothers, have about as much strain on their vitality from day to day as they can possibly, with their fragile constitutions, endure, they naturally prefer as few of these domestic upheavings as they can get along with, and retain their social footing; nor for one do I blame them for this. The blame, is in a system which subordinates everything lovely and desirable in the way of hospitality, to the coarse pleasures of show and gluttony. Who shall be the bold lady pioneer of reform in this matter?

Certainly, ladies have a personal interest in abolishing this

state of things, when gentlemen's dinner-parties, including half a dozen invitations, to the exclusion of every lady, except the hostess, are becoming so common. Make your dinners more simple, fair dames, and make your dress as simple as your dinners. Restore in this way the power to invite your friends oftener, and let your and your husband's invitations to dinner, include gentlemen *and their wives*. If the latter are fools, they will not become less so by being excluded from rational conversation. If they are *not* fools, it is an outrage to treat them as if they were. It would be useless, of course, to hint that dinner had better be at midday. Fashion would turn up her nose at the idea. And yet you know very well that *that* is the natural and most wholesome time to dine. As to gentlemen "not being able to leave their business," to do this, I might suggest that they go to bed earlier, to enable them to go earlier to that business in the morning. I might also add, that gentlemen generally can find time to do anything which they greatly desire to do. I might also add, that for one child or young person who eats this heartiest meal of the day, and goes directly to bed upon it without harm, thousands bring on an indigestion, which makes life a curse instead of the blessing it ought to be.

Where do you ever hear now, the frank, hearty invitation, "Come in any time and see us?" How is it possible, when a table preparation that involves so much thought and expense, is considered the proper way to honor a guest, and conversation and cordiality are secondary matters, if not altogether ignored? Of

what use is it to have a fine house, and well-stocked wine-cellar, and drilled servants, when the passion for show has reached such a pitch, that public saloons and suites of rooms in vast hotels, must be hired, and a man leave his own house, be it ever so fine, because he must have more room and more parade, than any private house can by any possibility furnish, without pitching the whole family into inextricable chaos and confusion for a month.

This is all false and wrong, and demoralizing. It is death to social life – death to the true happiness and well-being of the family, and in my opinion, ladies are to blame for it, and ladies only can effect a reform.

Simplify your toilets – simplify your dinners, ladies. There are many of you who have sufficient good sense to indorse this view of the case; how many are there with sufficient courage to defy the tyranny of omnipotent fashion and carry it out?

Now, let me tell you how it was in good old-fashioned New England towns; when people enjoyed life five times as well as now. Then husbands, wives, and children had not each a separate circle of acquaintances, and their chief aim was not to regulate matters, with a view to be in each other's society as little as possible. That fatal death-blow to the purity, happiness, and love of home.

Then you went at dark to tea. I am speaking of the old-fashioned New England parties. You and your husband, and your eldest boy or girl; the latter being instructed not to pull over the cake to get the best piece, or otherwise to misbehave themselves.

There were assembled the principal members of the church, and, above all, its pastor and spouse, and deacons ditto. The married women had on their best caps and collars, and the regulation black-silk-company-dress, which, in my opinion, has never been improved upon by profane modern fingers. The young girls wore a merino of bright hue, if it were winter, with a little frill of lace about the shoulders; or a white cambric dress if the mildness of the weather admitted. The men always in black, laity or clergy, with flesh-colored gloves, of Nature's own making, warranted to fit.

All assembled, the buzz of talk was soon agreeably interrupted by the entrance of a servant bearing a heavily-laden tray of cups and saucers, filled with tea and coffee, cream and sugar. This tray was rested on a table; and the host, rising, requested Rev. Mr. — to ask a blessing. He did it, and the youngsters, eying the cake, wished it had been shorter. So did the girl in charge of the tray. "Blessing" at last over, the tea and coffee were distributed. The matrons charging their initiatory fledglings "not to spill over," often wisely pouring a spoonful of coffee or tea, from the cup into the saucer, to prevent the former from any china-gymnastics unfavorable to the best gown or carpet. The men turned their toes in till they met; spread their red silk handkerchiefs over their bony knees, and on that risky, improvised, graceful lap, placed the hot cup of tea, with an awful sense of responsibility, which interfered with the half-finished account of the last "revival." Then came a tray of thinly-sliced bread and butter, delicate and tempting; rich

cake, guiltless of hartshorn or soda, with delicate sandwiches, and tiny tarts.

This ceremony gone through, the young people crawled from the maternal wing, and laughed and talked in corners, as freely and hilariously as if they were not "children of damnation," destined to eternal torment if they did not indorse the creed of their forefathers. Their elders, with satisfied stomachs, and cheerful voices and faces, seemed to have merged the awful "hell," too, for the time being; and nobody would have supposed them capable of bringing children into the world, to be scared through it with a claw-footed devil constantly at their backs.

As the evening went on, the buzz and noise increased. The youngsters giggled and pushed about, keeping jealous watch the while, for the nine o'clock tray of goodies, which was to delight their eyes and feast their palates. This tray contained the biggest oranges and apples, the freshest cluster-raisins, and almonds, hickory nuts, three-cornered nuts, filberts and grapes. After this came a tray of preserved quinces, or plums, or peaches, with little pitchers of *real* cream. Then, to wind up, little cunning glasses filled with lemonade, made of *lemons*.

Now the youngsters had plenty to do. So absorbed were they, cracking nuts and jokes, that when the minister, seizing the back of a chair in the middle of the room, said, "Let us pray," the difficulty of cutting a laugh off short in the middle, and disposing of their plates, presented itself in such an hysterical manner, that a pinch of the ear, or a shake of the shoulders, had to be resorted

to, to bring things to a spiritual focus. After prayers came speedy cloakings, shawlings, and kind farewells and greetings; and by *ten*, or shortly after, the hour at which modern parties *begin*, visitors and visited were all tucked comfortably between the sheets.

Now. Nobody can give a party that does not involve the expenditure of hundreds of dollars. Dinner, or evening party, it is all the same. The hostess muddles her brain about "devilled fowl," "frozen puddings," "meringue" things, of every shape – floral pyramids, for which she has *my* forgiveness, for fashion never had a more pardonable sin than this. She must have dozens of hired silver, and chairs, and hired waiters, and the mantua-maker must be driven wild for dress trimmings, and the interior of the house must be thrown off of the family track for days, before and after. And the good man of it must have a dozen kinds of wines, and as many kinds of cigars; and there must be more "courses," if it is a dinner, than you could count; and you must sit tedious hours, while these are trotted on and trotted off, by skilled skirmishers; and what with the necessity of all this restaurant-business, and the stupidity that comes of over-feeding, one might as well leave his brains at home when he goes into modern "society." Not to speak of the host and hostess, whose attempts at conversation are fettered, and spasmodic in consequence; for, have as many servants as you may, mistakes *will* happen, *crushing* mistakes, such as a dish located east instead of west, or wine wrongly placed, or the wrong wine rightly

placed, or a dish tardy, that should be speedy; all of which momentous things, to the scholastic mind of the host, or the intelligent brain of the hostess, being sufficient to make them forget that "the chief end of man" was not to cultivate his stomach. Now, if one must needs lure one's friends with a vulgar bill of fare, like a hotel, in order to ensure their presence; if one must think of the subject days beforehand, in one shape and another, and be bored, and worried, and badgered with these material things; if *bellies*, to speak politely, are to domineer over *brains* this way, then I say that "society," at such a price, isn't worth having. For one, I had rather go back to the weak lemonade and strong prayers of our forefathers.

Then, as to the dress of women. If there is one phrase more universally misapplied than another, it is the phrase "well-dressed." The first thing to be considered in this connection, is *fitness*. A superb and costly silk, resting upon the questionable straw in the bottom of an omnibus, excites only pity for the bad taste of the luckless wearer. A pair of tight-fitting, light kid gloves, on female fingers, on a day when the windows are crusted with frost, strikes us as an uncalled-for martyrdom under the circumstances; also a pair of high-heeled new boots, with polished soles, constantly threatening the wearer with a humiliating downfall, and necessitating slow and careful locomotion, on icy pavements, in company with a very pink nose. Bows of ribbon, jewelled combs and head-pins at breakfast, either at a hotel table or at home, do not convey to me an

idea of *fitness*; also, white or pink parasols for promenade or shopping excursions, whether the remainder of the dress is in keeping or not, and more often it is the latter. A rich velvet outer garment over a common dress; a handsome set of furs with a soiled bonnet; diamond earrings with shabby gloves; gold watch and trinkets, and a silk dress ornamented with grease pots; sloppy, muddy pavements and pink silk hose – all these strike the beholder as incongruous.

There are women who are slow to understand these things. The season, the atmosphere and the hour of the day have no bearing at all upon their decisions as to costume. A woman with restricted means, and unable to indulge in changes of apparel, instead of selecting fabrics or trimmings which will not invite attention to this fact, will often select such a stunning, glaring outfit, that the truth she would conceal, is patent to every beholder; an inexpensive dress, provided it be whole, clean, well-fitting and harmonious in its accessories, conveys the idea of being "well-dressed" quite as emphatically as a toilette five times more costly. But what is the use of talking? One woman shall go into her room, and, without study or thought, instinctively harmonize her whole attire, so that the most fastidious critic shall find no fault with her selection. Another shall put on the same things, and then neutralize the whole by some flaring, incongruous, idiotic "last touch" which she imagines her crowning success. She can't do it! and, what is worse, she can't be persuaded that she can't do it.

After all, what does it matter? growls some believer in "Watts on the Mind;" what does it matter what a woman *wears*? It is a free country. So it is; and yet I am glad the trees and the grass in it are green, not red. I am glad that the beautiful snow is not black. I am glad that every flower is not yellow, and that the sky is not a pea-green. Woman is by nature a neat and tidy creature; grace and beauty she strives for, be it ever so dimly. All that intelligently helps to this, I affirm to be a means of grace. It would not be amiss to inquire how much moral pollution and loss of self-respect among the women in our tenement houses is consequent upon their inability, amid such miserable surroundings, to appear in anything but their unwomanly rags. If a woman has a husband who is indifferent whether her hair is smoothed once a day or once a year, still let her, for her children's sake, strive to look as attractive as she can. "My mother is not so pretty as yours," said one child to another. The keen little eyes had noted the rumpled hair, the untidy wrapper, the slipshod shoe, which were considered good enough for the nursery, unless company was expected. Sickness excepted, this is wrong and unnecessary. Nothing that tends to make home bright is a matter of inconsequence, and this least of all. How many young mothers, sitting in their nurseries, love to recall the pleasant picture of *their* mother in hers. The neat dress – the shining hair, the beaming face. So let your children remember you. Be not pretty and tidy, *only* when company comes.

Then there is the school question, which is never long out

of my mind. The papers are full of "school advertisements," of every kind, "*Which is the best?*" ask the bewildered parents as they look over the thousand-and-one Prospectus-es and read the formidable list of "branches" taught in each, between the hours of nine and three, for each day, Sundays excepted. They look at their little daughter. "It is time, they say, that she learned something;" and that is true; but they do not consider that is not yet time for her to learn *everything*; and that in the attempt she will probably break down before the experiment is half made. They do not consider, in their anxiety, that she should be educated with the railroad speed so unhappily prevalent; that to keep a growing child in school from nine till three is simply torture; and to add to that lessons out of school, an offence, which should come under the head of "Cruelty to Animals," and punished accordingly by the city authorities; who, in their zeal to decide upon the most humane manner in which to kill calves and sheep, seem quite to overlook the slow process by which the children of New York are daily murdered. That "everybody does so;" that "all schools" keep these absurd hours; that "teachers want the afternoons to themselves," – seem to me puerile reasons, when I meet each day, at three o'clock, the great army of children, bearing in their bent shoulders, narrow chests and pale faces, the unmistakable marks of this overstrain of the brain, at a critical age. And when I see, in addition, the piles of books under their arms, effectually to prevent the only alleviation of so grave a mistake, in the outdoor exercise that their cramped limbs, and tired brains so loudly

call for, after school hours, I have no words to express my sorrow and disgust of our present school system.

It is not teachers, but *parents*, who are to right this matter. The former but echo the wishes of the latter. If parents think physical education a matter of no consequence, why should teachers love those children better than the parents themselves? If parents are so anxious for the cramming process, which is filling our church-yards so fast, why should teachers, who "must live," interfere? Now and then, one more humane, less self-seeking, than the majority, will venture to suggest that the pupil has already quite as much mental strain as is safe for its tender years; but when the reply is in the form of a request from the parent that "another branch will not make much difference," what encouragement has the teacher to continue to oppose such stupidity? Not long since, I heard of a mother who was boasting to a friend of the smartness and precocity of her little daughter of seven years, "who attended school from nine till three each day, and studied most of the intervening time; and was so fond of her books *that all night, in her sleep, she was saying over her geography lessons and doing her sums in arithmetic.*" Comment on such folly is unnecessary. I throw out these few hints, hoping that one mother, at least, may pause long enough to give so important a subject a moment's thought. That she may ask, whether it would not be wise occasionally to visit the school-room where her child spends so much of its time; and examine the state of ventilation in the apartment, and see if the desk, at which the child sits so long,

is so contrived that it might have been handed down from the days of the Inquisition, as a model instrument of torture. I will venture to say, that her husband takes far better care, and expends more pains-taking thought, with his favorite horse, if he has one, than she ever has on the physical well-being of her child. What *right*, I ask, has she to bring children into the world, who is too indolent, or too thoughtless, or too pleasure-loving to guide their steps safely, happily, and above all, *healthily* through it?

There is another topic on which I wish to speak to women. I hope to live to see the time when they will consider it a *disgrace* to be sick. When women, and men too, with flat chests and stooping shoulders, will creep round the back way, like other violators of known laws. Those who *inherit* sickly constitutions have my sincerest pity. I only request one favor of them, that they cease perpetuating themselves till they are physically on a sound basis. But a woman who laces so tightly that she breathes only by a rare accident; who vibrates constantly between the confectioner's shop and the dentist's office; who has ball-robcs and jewels in plenty, but who owns neither an umbrella, nor a water-proof cloak, nor a pair of thick boots; who lies in bed till noon, never exercises, and complains of "total want of appetite," save for pastry and pickles, is simply a disgusting nuisance. Sentiment is all very nice; but, were I a man, I would beware of a woman who "couldn't eat." Why don't she take care of herself? Why don't she take a nice little bit of beefsteak with her breakfast, and a nice *walk*— not *ride*— after it? Why don't

she stop munching sweet stuff between meals? Why don't she go to bed at a decent time, and lead a clean, healthy life? The doctors and confectioners have ridden in their carriages long enough; let the butchers and shoemakers take a turn at it. A man or woman who "can't eat" is never sound on any question. It is waste breath to converse with them. They take hold of everything by the wrong handle. Of course it makes them very angry to whisper pityingly, "dyspepsia," when they advance some distorted opinion; but I always do it. They are not going to muddle my brain with their theories, because their internal works are in a state of physical disorganization. Let them go into a Lunatic Asylum and be properly treated till they can learn how they are put together, and how to manage themselves sensibly.

How I *rejoice* in a man or woman with a chest; who can look the sun in the eye, and step off as if they had not wooden legs. It is a rare sight. If a woman now has an errand round the corner, she must have a carriage to go there; and the men, more dead than alive, so lethargic are they with constant smoking, creep into cars and omnibuses, and curl up in a corner, dreading nothing so much as a little wholesome exertion. The more "tired" they are, the more diligently they smoke, like the women who drink perpetual *tea* "to keep them up."

Keep them up! Heavens! I am fifty-five, and I feel half the time as if I were just made. To be sure I was born in Maine, where the timber and the human race last; but I do not eat pastry, nor candy, nor ice-cream. I do not drink tea! I walk, not ride. I

own stout boots – pretty ones, too! I have a water-proof cloak, and no diamonds. I like a nice bit of beefsteak and a glass of ale, and anybody else who wants it may eat pap. I go to bed at ten, and get up at six. I dash out in the rain, because it feels good on my face. I don't care for my clothes, but I *will* be well; and after I am buried, I warn you, don't let any fresh air or sunlight down on my coffin, if you don't want me to get up.

NOTES UPON PREACHERS AND PREACHING

I CAN imagine nothing more disheartening to a clergyman, than to go to church, with an excellent sermon in his coat-pocket, and find an audience of twenty-five people. I was one of twenty-five, the other night, who can bear witness, that having turned out, in a pelting rain, to evening service, the clergyman preached to us with as much eloquence, good sense and zeal as if his audience numbered twenty-five hundred. You may ask why shouldn't he? If he believes *one* soul is more value than all the world, why shouldn't he? Merely because there is as much human nature in a clergyman as in anybody else. Merely because he is, like other people, affected by outward influences; and a row of empty seats might well have a depressing physical effect, notwithstanding his "belief."

When I go to church I want to carry something back with me wherewithal to fight the devil through the week. I don't want the ancestry of Jeroboam and Ezekiel, and Keranhappuck raked up and commented on; or any other fossil dodge, to cover up the speaker's barrenness of head or heart. I want something for *to-day*— for over-burdened men and women in this year of our Lord 1869. Something *live*; something that has some bearing on our daily work; something that recognizes the seething elements

about us, and their bearings on the questions of conscience and duty we are all hourly called on to settle. I want a minister who won't forever take refuge in "the Ark," for fear of saying something that conservatism will hum! and ha! over.

One day I heard this remark, coming out of church where that style of sermon was preached: "Well – what has all that to do with *me*?" Now that's just it. It expresses my idea better than a whole library could. What has that to do with me? *Me* individually – bothered, perplexed, sore-hearted, weary *me*, hungry for soul-comfort. I think this is the trouble; ministers live too much in their libraries. If they would set fire to them, and study human nature more, the world would be the gainer. They need to get out of the old time-crust ed groove. To stir round a bit, and see something besides Jeroboam; to know the tragedies that are going on in the lives of their parishioners, and find out the alleviations and the remedy. We have got to live on earth a while before we "get to heaven." It might be as well to consider that occasionally. It is quite as important to show us how to live here as how to get there.

I don't believe in a person's eyes being so fixed on heaven, that he goes blundering over everybody's corns on the way there. If that's his Christianity, the sooner he gets tripped up the better. I saw "a Christian" the other day. It was a workingman, who, noticing across the street a little girl of seven years, trying to lift with her little cold fingers a bundle, and poise it on her head, put down his box of tools, went across the street and lifted it up

for her, and with a cheery "there now, my dear," went smiling on his way.

Oh, if clergymen would only study their fellow men more. If they would less often try to unravel some double-twisted theological knot, which, if pulled out straight, would never carry one drop of balm to a suffering fellow-being, or teach him how to bear bravely and patiently the trials, under which soul and body are ready to faint. If, looking into some yearning face before them on a Sunday, they would preach only to its wistful asking for spiritual help, in words easy to be understood – in heart-tones not to be mistaken – how different would Sundays seem, to many *women*, at least, whose heart-aches, and unshared burdens, none but their Maker knows. "Heavy laden!" Let our clergymen never forget that phrase in their abstruse examination of text and context. Let them not forget that as Lazarus watched for the falling crumbs from Dives' table, so some poor harassed soul before them may be sitting with expectant ear, for the hopeful words, that shall give courage to shoulder again the weary burden. I sometimes wonder, were I a clergyman, *could* I preach in this way to nodding plumes, and flashing jewels, and rustling silks? Would not my very soul be paralyzed within me, as theirs seems to be? And then I wish that *nobody* could own a velvet cushioned pew in church; that the doors of all churches were open to every man and woman, in whatsoever garb they might chance to wear in passing, and *not* parcelled and divided off for the reception of certain classes, and the exclusion (for it amounts to that) of those

who most need spiritual help and teaching. You tell me that there are places provided for such people. So there are cars for colored people to ride in. *My Christianity*, if I have any, builds up no such walls of separation. How often have I seen a face loitering at a church threshold, listening to the swelling notes of the organ, and longing to go in, were it not for the wide social gulf between itself and those who assembled – I will not say worshipped – there, and I know if that clergyman, inside that church, spoke as his Master spake when on earth, that he would soon preach to empty walls. They *want* husks; they pay handsomely for husks, and they get them, I say in my vexation, as the door swings on its hinges in some poor creature's face, and he wanders forth to struggle unaided as best he may with a poor man's temptations. Our Roman Catholic brethren are wiser. Their creed is not my creed, save this part of it: "That the rich and the poor meet here together, and the Lord is the Maker of them all." I often go there to see it. I am glad when the poor servant drops on her knees in the aisle, and makes the sign of the cross, that nobody bids her rise, to make way for a silken robe that may be waiting behind her. I am glad the mother of many little children may drop in for a brief moment, before the altar, to recognize her spiritual needs, and then pass out to the cares she may not longer lose sight of. I do not believe as they do, but it gladdens my heart all the same, that one man is as good as his neighbor at least *there*— before God. I breathe freer at the thought. I can sit in a corner and watch them pass in and out, and rejoice that every one, how humble soever,

feels that he or she *is* that church, just as much as the richest foreigner from the cathedrals of the old world, whom they may jostle in passing out. Said one poor girl to me – "I don't care what happens to me, or how hard I work through the week, if I can get away to my Sunday morning mass." She was a woman to be sure, and women, high and low, have more spirituality than men. *They*

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.