

FERN FANNY

CAPER-SAUCE: A
VOLUME OF CHIT-CHAT
ABOUT MEN, WOMEN,
AND THINGS.

Fanny Fern
Caper-Sauce: A Volume
of Chit-Chat about Men,
Women, and Things.

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Caper-Sauce: A Volume of Chit-Chat about Men, Women, and Things.:

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of Chit-Chat about Men,
Women, and Things

PREFACE

Excuse me. None this time. There have already been too many big porticos before little buildings.

Fanny Fern.

New York, 1872.

EDITORS

I am not disposed to pity Editors. On the whole, I think they have a very good time. That national sugar-plum for American boys, "Maybe, my son, you will be one day *President*," might be changed advantageously for "My son, you may live some day to be an Editor." As for the *present* President, if he can sleep o' nights, he can live through anything! I repeat it, Editors have a good time, no matter what they say to the contrary. In the first place, I know that the position of an editor, if honorably filled, is second to none in this country. He need envy no one his influential power; would that in many cases it were more conscientiously wielded. If an *Editor* is an ignorant man, it is his own fault, no matter from what small beginnings he may have risen. Coming in contact, as he does, with information every instant, on all the absorbing topics of the day, it is next to impossible he should not be well informed. Read he must, whether he will or not. Think on what he has read he must; tell his subscribers, in words, what he thinks about it, and reflect and decide upon the submitted thoughts of others for his columns, he must. Hence the mind of an Editor is, or may be, a perfect Encyclopedia of information.

Of course he has his peculiar botherations; it would be a blessing if his subscription list were large enough for him to say just what he pleases right and left, without fear or favor.

It would be a blessing if his subscribers would always pay punctually, without dunning. It would be a blessing, when he uses superhuman efforts to please them, if they never would find fault or grumble, for the sake of grumbling. It would be a blessing if they wouldn't stay so long when they come in to see him "just a minute," and he is in a frenzied hurry to say do go, and can't. It would be a blessing (to those who apply) if he could publish and pay for, at the valuation of the writers, all the immortal trash that is offered. It would be a blessing if other editors, "who can see nothing in his paper," wouldn't steal his articles constantly – editorial and contributed – without credit.

But, on the contrary, how came that beautiful bouquet on his desk? Where that fine engraving on his office wall? How came that beautiful picture and convenient inkstand there? I'd have you to know that the donors have not always an axe they wish to grind in that office. I dare say you will try to make me believe that Editors are human. Now I deny that, for I myself have, in past days, had evidence to the contrary. But never mind that now. You may tell me that Editors are not above the weakness of publicly and slyly slipping in a good word for a good friend, when he needs it, and that they are not above giving a bad "friend" a good, satisfying dig when he needs it, and so would you. If a man is to be overhauled for that, there's got to be a monstrous overturning of matters in other places beside Editors' offices. I confess I sometimes covet the quantities of books he accumulates free gratis for his library, and I should like to be allowed to review

some of 'em after a fashion of my own, if nobody knew who did it; and I should like occasionally to dust their horrible desks for the poor creatures, and open those hermetically sealed windows, and advise them not to make themselves prematurely bald by wearing their hats in their offices, week in and week out, as if it were necessary their ideas should be kept warm like chickens in order to hatch.

Only that I am convinced that everybody must work in his own way, and that if Editors had to work in a clean place, they couldn't work at all. Now if they opened their office windows of a hot day, they might possibly be cooler, and a cool Editor, in times like these, when all the fire and fury we could master would not begin to express our national emotions, you see for yourself the thing wouldn't be tolerated. Beside, some of them ought to be getting used to a hot place, and they might as well begin now.

I wonder are Editors aware of how much importance is their Poet's corner! I wonder if they know that the most inveterate pursuer of brooms and gridirons that ever kept a good man's house tidy, likes a bit of sentiment, in that shape, in the family paper. I wonder do Editors know, how, when the day's work is done, she likes to pull that paper out from some old tea-caddy, or broken flower-pot – that long ago fell into disuse, and seating herself with a long-drawn breath of relief in the old-fashioned chair, where all her Tommys and Marys have been rocked, give herself up to the quiet enjoyment of its pages. Presently, as she reads, a tear gathers in her eye; she dashes it quickly away with an

"ah – me," and laying her head back upon the chair, and closing eyes that were once much bluer than now, she is soon far, far away from the quiet home where her treadmill round of everyday duties has been for many years so faithfully performed, and, perhaps, alas! so thanklessly accepted. The cat comes purring round her feet, and Tray comes scratching at the door, but she does not move, till the sound of a heavy and familiar footstep is heard in the entry or hall; then, starting up, and taking her scissors from the long pocket at her side, she clips the precious verses from the paper and hides them in her bosom. Perhaps *you* might turn up your critical nose at those verses; never mind, they have touched *her* heart; and many times, when she is alone, she will read them over; and so long as they hold together, she will keep them in a little needle-case in her work-box, to read when "things go wrong," and a good, safe cry will ease the heart.

Her good man picks up the mutilated paper, and she says, "It was only a bit of poetry, John." Now, there are more Johns than one in the world, but he don't think of *that*, as turning to some political article he says, "Oh, you are quite welcome to all that sort of stuff;" nor does he know how much that other John had to do with her crying over those verses, which somebody certainly must have written, who, like herself, had married the wrong John.

Now, gentlemen Editors, crowd what else you may out of your papers, but *don't crowd out the poetry, or think it of small consequence*. Take the affidavit of one who has seen the clipped

verses from your papers hid away in pocket-books, tucked away in needle-cases, speared upon pin-cushions, pinned up on toilet glasses, and murmured over in the mystic hour of twilight, just before "*John comes home to tea*;" and always have a bit of poetry in your columns for her who has so potent a voice in the choice of a family paper. I publicly promulgate this bit of wisdom, though I am very well aware that you will pass it off for your own, and neither credit *me* nor my book for it!

A word on a practice too common in some newspapers. I refer to the flippant manner in which the misfortunes and misdemeanors of certain classes, brought to the notice of our courts, are reported for the amusement of the community at large. Surely, it is melancholy enough that a drunken mother should be picked up in the gutter with her unconscious babe; or a young girl, scarcely in her teens, be found guilty of theft; or, that a husband and father should beat or murder her whom he had sworn to cherish, without narrating it after this heartless fashion. For instance:

John Flaherty, after beautifully painting a black and blue rim round his wife's eyes, was brought into court this morning to answer the question why he preferred that particular color; and not being able to give a satisfactory reason for the same, he was treated to a pleasant little ride to a stone building, where he was accommodated with a private room, board and lodging included.

Or thus:

Mary Honoria, scarlet-lipped, plump, and sweet sixteen, being fond of jewelry on her pretty person, and having stolen her mistress's watch, was waited upon by a gallant policeman, who escorted her little ladyship into court, in the presence of an admiring crowd, before whom her black eyes sparkled with a rage that but added new beauty to their lustre.

Now, I protest against this disgusting, demoralizing, and heartless mention of the sins and follies of poor wretches, the temptations of whose lot are as the sands of the sea-shore for multitude; who, ill-paid, ill-fed, worse-lodged, disheartened, discouraged, fall victims to the snares, in the shape of low grogeries, set for them by the very men who laugh over *their* well-spread breakfast tables, at this pitiful and revolting recital of their success. *Oh, write over against the poor wretch's name, as God does, why he or she fell!* or at least cease making it the subject for a jeer. Make it *your* son, *your* daughter, and then pen that flippant, heartless paragraph if you can. And yet, it was somebody's son, or daughter, or sister, or husband, unworthy it may be, (who is not?) but alas! often forgiven, and still dearly loved, to whose home that paragraph may come like a poisoned arrow, wounding the innocent, paralyzing the hand which was powerless enough before to struggle with its hapless fate; for not on the guilty does such blight fall heaviest. The young boy – the toiling, unprotected daughter – the aged mother – ah! what if they were *yours*?

About Doctors. – We wish doctors could ever agree. One's head gets muddled, reading their books on health, by antagonistic opinions on the same subject, from eminent sources. Experience is an excellent doctor, though he never had a diploma. What is good for you, you know is good for *you* although it may not be good for another. There is one point on which doctors all agree, and that is, they very rarely give physic to their own families. Why not? A friend suggests that it is from sheer benevolence, in order that they may have more left for other people.

MY NOTION OF MUSIC

I've been defending myself from the charge of "not knowing what music is." Perhaps I don't know. But when I go to a fashionable concert, and the lady "*artiste*," I believe that is the regulation-word, comes out in her best bib and tucker, with a gilt battle-axe in her back hair, and a sun-flower in her bosom, led by the tips of her white gloves, by the light of a gleaming bracelet, and stands there twiddling a sheet of music, preparatory to the initiatory scream, I feel like screaming myself. Now if she would just trot on, in her morning gown, darning a pair of stockings, and sit naturally down in her old rocking-chair, and give me "Auld Robin Gray," instead of running her voice up and down the scales for an hour to show me how high and how low she can go without dropping down in a fit, I'd like it. One trial of her voice that way, to test its capacity, satisfies me. It is as good as a dozen, and a great deal better. I don't want to listen to it a whole evening. I *will* persist, that running up and down the scales that way isn't "*music*." Then if you only knew the agony I'm in, when drawing near the end of one of her musical gymnastics, she essays to wind up with one of those swift, deafening *don't-stop-to-breathe finales*, you *would* pity me. I get hysterical. I wish she would split her throat at once, or stop. I want to be let out. I want the roof lifted; I feel a cold perspiration breaking out on my forehead. I know that presently she will catch up that blue-

gauze skirt and skim out that side-door, only to come and do it all over again, in obedience to that dead-head encore. You see all this machinery disenchant me. It takes away my appetite, like telling me at dinner how much beef is a pound. I had rather the ropes and pulleys of music would keep *behind* the curtain.

Of course my "taste is not cultivated," and moreover, the longer I live the less chance there is of it. On that point, I'm what country folks call "sot." Sometimes, when passing one of these concert-rooms of an evening, I *have* caught a note that I took home with me. Caught it with the help of the darkness and the glimmering stars, and the fresh wind on my forehead, and a blessed ignorance of the distorted mouth and the heaving millinery that sent it forth. But take me *in*, and you'll have an hysterical maniac. The solemn regulation faces, *looking* at that "music," set me bewitched to laugh and outrage that fashion-drilled and kidded audience. Bless you, *I* can't help it. I had rather hear Dinah sing "Old John Brown" over her wash-tub. I had rather go over to Mr. Beecher's church some Sunday night and hear that vast congregation swell forth Old Hundred, with each man and woman's *soul* so in it, that earthly cares and frets are no more remembered, than the old garments we cast out of sight.

When the words of a favorite hymn are read from the pulpit, and I am expecting the good old-fashioned tune, that has been wedded to it since my earliest recollection, and instead, I am treated to a series of quirks and quavers by a professional quartette, I can't help wishing myself where the

whole congregation sing with the heart and the understanding, in the old-fashioned manner. I can have "opera" on week-days, and scenery and fine dresses thrown in. Sunday I want Sunday, not opera in *negligé*.

Of course it is high treason for me to make such an avowal, so, while I am in for it, I may as well give another twist to the rope that is round my neck. The other night I went to hear "The Messiah." The words are lovely, and as familiar to my Puritan ears as the "Assembly's Catechism;" but when they kept on repeating, "The Lord is in his hol – the Lord is in – is in his hol – is in – the Lord is in his hol" – and when the leader, slim, and clothed in inky black, kept his arms going like a Jack in a box, I grew anything but devout. The ludicrous side of it got the better of me; and when my companion, who pretends to be no Christian at all, turned to me, who am reputed to be one, in a state of exaltation, and said, "Isn't that grand, Fanny?" he could have wished that the tears in my eyes were not hysterical, from long-suppressed laughter. He says he never will take me there again, and I only hope he will keep his word. All the "music" I got out of it was in one or two lovely "solos."

Now what I want to know is, which has the most love for *genuine* music – he or I?

The fact is, I like to find my music in unexpected, simple ways, where the machinery is not visible, like the Galvanic gyrations of that "leader," for instance. That kind of thing recalls too vividly my old "fa-sol-la" singing-school, where the boys pulled

my curls, and gave me candy and misspelt notes.

There is evidently something wanting in my make-up, with regard to "music," when I can *cry* at the singing of the following simple verses, by the whole congregation in church, and do the opposite at the scientific performance of "The Messiah." Listen to the verses:

"Pass me not, O gentle Saviour,
Hear my humble cry;
While on others Thou art smiling,
Do not pass me by.
Saviour, Saviour,
Hear my humble cry.

"If I ask Him to receive me,
Will he say me Nay?
Not till earth and not till heaven
Shall have passed away."

"BUDDING SPRING" – IN THE CITY

We of the city do not appreciate the blessing of closed windows and silence, until budding Spring comes. The terrific war-whoop of the milkman inaugurates the new-born day long before we should otherwise recognize it. Following him is the rag-man, with his handcart, to which six huge jangling, terrific cow-bells are fastened, as an accompaniment to the yet louder yell of "r-a-g-s." Then comes the "S-t-r-a-w-b-e-r-r-y" man, with lungs of leather, splitting your head, as you try to sip your coffee in peace. Close upon his heels, before he has hardly turned the corner, comes the pine-apple man, who tries to outscreech *him*. Then the fish-man, who blows a hideous tin trumpet, loud enough to rouse the Seven Sleepers, and discordant enough to set all your nerves jangling, if they had not already been taxed to the utmost. You jump up in a frenzy to close the window, only to see that the fish-man has stopped his abominable cart at the door of a neighbor, who keeps a carriage and livery, and is therefore fond of cheap, stale fish; where he is deliberately cleaning and splitting them, and throwing the refuse matter in the street, as a bouquet for your nostrils during the warm day. Then comes a procession of heavy carts, the drivers of which are lashing their skeleton nags to fury, with loud cracks of their whips, to see which shall

win in the race, while every one of your window-panes shakes as if an earthquake were in progress, as they rumble over the stones. By this time comes a great mob of boys, with vigorous lungs, tossing each other's caps in the air, and screeching with a power perfectly inexplicable at only six, ten, or twelve years of practice. Indeed, the smaller the boy the bigger is his war-whoop, as a general rule. Then comes a wheezy organ-grinder, who, encouraged by the fatal show of plants in your windows, imagines you to be romantically fond of "The Morning Star," and immediately begins, in verse, to describe how he "feels." Nothing short of fifty cents will purchase his absence, which encouragement is followed by some miserable little rats of boys, anxious to succeed him on the violin and harp.

By this time your hair stands on end, and beads of perspiration form upon your nose. You fly for refuge to the back of the house. Alas! there is a young thing of "sixteen summers" and no winters running up and down the gamut on a tin-kettle piano. In the next house is a little dog barking as if his last hour was coming; while upon the shed are two cats, in the most inflamed state of bristle, glaring like fiends, and "*maow*" – ing in the most hellish manner at each other's whiskers. You go down into the parlor, and seat yourself there. Your neighbor, Tom Snooks, is smoking at his window, and puffing it right through yours over your lovely roses, the perfume of which he quite extinguishes with his nasty odor.

Heavens! And this is "Spring!" "Budding Spring!" The poets make no mention of these little things in their "Odes!"

Well – at least, you say to yourself, there will be peace and heavenly quiet with the stars at midnight, by the open window. I will be patient till then.

Is there?

What is that? A policeman's loud rap-rap on the pavement for assistance to capture a burglar. Next a woman's scream; the brute who just accosted the poor wretch has struck her a heavy blow upon the temple. And now reels past a drunken man, zigzagging down the street, with a little whimpering boy by one hand, old enough to know what a "Station-house" means, and trembling lest "father" should be taken there.

You throw yourself upon your bed, weary and sick at heart. Even the stars seem to glow with a red, unnatural light, as if they too were worn with watching the wrongs and frets they nightly look down upon.

"Balmy night." What liars poets can be!

A PEEP AT BOSTON

Boston is a lovely place to be baptized in, and to go back to. My old love, "*Boston Common*" – that good, old-fashioned, unspoiled, unmodernized name – looks more lovely this summer than I ever remember to have seen it. New York may well take a lesson from its order and neatness, with regard to our ill-kept *city* parks. I sat there, under those lovely trees which used to wave over my school-girl head; and had it not been for the little bright-eyed grandchild beside me picking buttercups, I might have fancied it was Saturday afternoon, and no school, and that I was to be back to my mother's apronstrings "by sundown, without fail." I know I could not have enjoyed even then the birds' song, or the sparkling pond, or the big trees more than at that moment. Out of my dream-land, whither they had led me, I was awakened by a jump into my lap, and the question, "And did you *really* play with buttercups here, when you were a little girl?" It was a long bridge that question led me over, so long that I forgot to answer till the question was repeated. I had to stop, and outgrow buttercups, and hold again by my matronly hand a little creature, the counterpart of my questioner, who long since closed her eyes forever, in this world, upon us both! It took time, you see, before I could say, "Yes, dear; it was just in this very lovely spot that both your mother and I picked buttercups when children, on the bright Saturday afternoons of long ago; and six years and a half

of your little life I have waited, to see *you* run down those sloping paths, and to show you the 'Frog-Pond,' and to tell you to look up into the branches that nearly touch the sky; and now here we are! But there were no 'deer' feeding on this Common when I was a little girl, but instead *cows* to whom I gave plenty of room to pass as I went along; and instead of that gay little hat, with mimic grasses and daisies, such as I have put upon your head, my mother tied under my chin a little sun-bonnet. And she didn't run to me if I sneezed, as I do to you, for I had a heap of brothers and sisters, and we had to take care of our own sneezing; but I know I had twenty-five cents to spend on Fourth of July; and I know that, if any little girl's belt in Boston was ever tightened by roast turkey and pie more than mine was on 'Thanksgiving day,' I pity her! I wonder what has become of all the little children I used to play with here? We used to go up to the tip-top of that State House, I know; but I don't care to try it now. Not that it would tire me – of course not; but I've seen all that can be seen from that dome, and a little farther too."

Oh, the peace and loveliness of sweet "Mount Auburn!" The new graves since I was there, and the old graves now moss-grown that I remember so well! I, too, shall sleep sweetly there some day; but the hardest pang I shall know, between now and then, will be letting go the little hand that clasped mine to-day, as I walked about there. And yet there were *little* graves all around us. *He* knows best!

In Boston I saw the remains of "The Jubilee." I was asked,

"Did I hear and see the Jubilee?" I was supposed, as coming from New York, to grieve at the success of "The Jubilee;" and being an adopted New Yorker, to feel like skulking round the back streets in Boston, covered with confusion that Manhattan had no "Jubilee." Lord bless you! I love every *bean* that was ever baked in Boston; every cod-fish-ball ever fried; and every brown-bread loaf ever baked there. I know too, as well as any Bostonian, that —

"Zaccheus he
Did climb the tree,
His Lord and Master
For to see;"

and I made a courtesy to the ground, when I came in sight of "Park-street" steeple, and "Faneuil Hall!" so don't be pitching into me. Hit some other fellow who isn't "up" in the Assembly's catechism, and "total depravity," and brown bread. "Jubilee" as much as you want to; the world is a big place. "Holler" away!

New England, all hail to thy peerless thrift! Thou art cranky and crotchety; thou art "sot," uncommon "sot," in thy ways, owing doubtless to the amiable sediment of English blood in thy veins. Thou wilt not be cheated in a bargain, even by thy best friend; but, in the meantime, that enableth thy large heart to give handsomely when charity knocks at thy door. Thy pronunciation may be peculiar, but, in the meantime, what thou dost not know, and cannot do, is rarely worth knowing or doing. Thou never

fast marble, and silver, and plate glass, and statuary, in thy show-parlors, and shabby belongings where the world does not penetrate. Thou hast not stuccoed walls, with big cracks in them, or anything in thy domiciles, hanging as it were by the eyelids. Every nail is driven so that it will stay; every hinge hung so that it will work thoroughly. Every bolt and key and lock perform their duty like a martinet, so long as a piece of them endures. If thou hast a garden, be it only a square foot, it is made the most of with its "long *saace*" and "short *saace*" and "wimmin's notions," in the shape of flowers and caraway seed, to chew on Sunday, when the minister gets as far as "seventeenthly," and carnal nature will fondly recur to the waiting pot of baked beans in the kitchen oven. O! New England, here could I shed salt tears at the thought of thy baked beans, for Gotham knows them not. Alluding to that edible, I am met with a pitying sneer, accompanied with that dread word to snobs – "*provincial!*" It is ever thus, my peerless, with the envy which cannot attain to the perfection it derides. For you should see, my thrifty New England, the watery, white-livered, tasteless, swimmy, sticky poultice which Gotham christens "baked beans." My soul revolts at it. It is an unfeeling, wretched mockery of the rich, brown, crispy, succulent contents of that "platter" – yes, *platter* – I will say it! – which erst delighted my eyes in the days when I swallowed the Catechism without a question as to its infallibility. The flavor of the beans "haunts memory still;" but as to the Catechism, the world is progressing, and I am not one to put a drag on its wheels, believing that and

it is best to let "natur" caper, especially as you can't help it; and after the dust it has kicked up has cleared away, we shall see what we shall see, be it wheat or chaff. Beside, the most conservative must admit, that though Noah's Ark was excellent for the flood, the "Great Eastern" is an improvement on it; and *'tisn't pretty, so they say who oftenest practise it!* to stand with the Bible in your hand in 1862, and clamor for a private latch-key to heaven.

Truth is sure
And will endure,

But I have wandered from my baked beans. I want some. Some New England baked beans. Some of "mother's beans." But, alas, mother's oven is fast disappearing. Mother's oven, where the beans stayed in all night, with the brown bread. Alas! it has given way to new-fangled "ranges," which "don't know beans." Excuse the vulgarity of the expression, but in such a cause I shan't stand for trifles. If you want rose-leaf sentimental-refinement, together with creamy patriotism, you may look in the columns of the Whip-Syllabub-Family-Visitor. This is a digression.

When I started for a New England tour, it was my intention to get some of those beans; but the hotels there are getting so "genteel" with their paper-pantalettes on the roast-chicken's legs, and their paper frills on the roast-pigs'-tails, that I was convinced, that only at a genuine unsophisticated farm-house, where I could light down unannounced on Sarah-Jane – could this edible in its

native and luscious beauty be found.

Next summer, if "strategy" and the rebels don't chew us up, I start on a tour for those beans; nor am I to be imposed upon by any "genteel" substitutes or abortions under that name!

A Hint to Parents. – When parents are considering the question of the hours of study for growing children in our schools, let them do it without any reference to the side question, how they can "bear those noisy children, during the subtracted hours, at home." Perhaps they can better bear this than to pay the doctor's bills. This is the way to look at it, whether it be regarded in a selfish or a humanitarian point of view.

BLACKWELL'S ISLAND

Prior to visiting Blackwell's Island, my ideas of that place were very forlorn and small-pox-y. It makes very little difference, to be sure, to a man, or a woman, shut up in a cell eight feet by four, how lovely are the out-door surroundings; how blue the river that plashes against the garden wall below, flecked with white sails, and alive with gay pleasure-seekers, whose merry laugh has no monotone of sadness, that the convict wears the badge of degradation; and yet, after all, one involuntarily says to one's self, so instinctively do we turn to the cheerful side, I am glad they are located on this lovely island. Do you shrug your shoulders, Sir Cynic, and number over the crimes they have committed? Are *your* crimes against society less, that they are written down only in God's book of remembrance? Are *you* less guilty that you have been politic enough to commit only those that a short-sighted, unequal human law sanctions? Shall I pity these poor wrecks of humanity less, because they are so recklessly self-wrecked? because they turn away from my pity? Before I come to this, I must know, as their Maker knows, what evil influences have encircled their cradles. How many times, when their stomachs have been empty, some full-fed, whining disciple, has presented them with a Bible or a Tract, saying, "Be ye warmed and filled." I must know how often, when their feet have tried to climb the narrow, up-hill path of right, the eyes that have watched, have

watched only for their halting; never noting, as God notes, the steps that did *not* slip – never holding out the strong right hand of help when the devil with a full larder was tugging furiously at their skirts to pull them backward; but only saying "I told you so," when he, laughing at your pharisaical stupidity, succeeded.

I must go a great way back of those hard, defiant faces, where hate of their kind seems indelibly burnt in; back – back – to the soft blue sky of infancy, overclouded before the little one had strength to contend with the flashing lightning and pealing thunder of misfortune and poverty which stunned and blinded his moral perceptions. I cannot see that mournful procession of men, filing off into those dark cells, none too dark, none too narrow, alas! to admit troops of devils, without wishing that some white-winged angel might enter too; and when their shining eyeballs peer at my retreating figure through the gratings, my heart shrieks out in its pain – oh! believe that there is pity here – only pity; and I hate the bolts and bars, and I say this is *not* the way to make bad men good; or, at least if it be, these convicts should not, when discharged, be thrust out loose into the world with empty pockets, and a bad name, to earn a speedy "through-ticket" back again. I say, if this *be* the way, let humanity not stop here, but take one noble step forward, and when she knocks off the convict's fetters, and lands him on the opposite shore, let her not turn her back and leave him there as if her duty were done; but let her *there* erect a noble institution where he can find a *kind* welcome and *instant* employment; before temptation,

joining hands with his necessities, plunge him again headlong into the gulf of sin.

And here seems to me to be the loose screw in these institutions; admirably managed as many of them are, according to the prevalent ideas on the subject. You may tell me that I am a woman, and know nothing about it; and I tell you that I *want* to know. I tell you, that I don't believe the way to restore a man's lost self-respect is to degrade him before his fellow-creatures; to brand him, and chain him, and poke him up to show his points, like a hyena in a menagerie. No wonder that he growls at you, and grows vicious; no wonder that he eats the food you thrust between the bars of his cage with gnashing teeth, and a vow to take it out of the world somehow, when he gets out; no wonder that he thinks the Bible you place in his cell a humbug, and God a myth. I would have you startle up his self-respect by placing him in a position to show that you trusted him; I would have you give him something to hold in charge, for which he is in honor responsible; appeal to his *better* feelings, or if they smoulder almost to extinction, fan them into a flame for him out of that remnant of God's image which the vilest can never wholly destroy. *Anything but shutting a man up with hell in his heart to make him good.* The devils may well chuckle at it. And above all, tear down that taunting inscription over the prison-hall door at Blackwell's Island – "The way of transgressors is hard" – and place instead of it, "Neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more."

Now, you can step aside, Mrs. Grundy; what I am about to write is not for your over-fastidious ear. *You*, who take by the hand the polished *roué*, and welcome him with a sweet smile to the parlor where sit your young, trusting daughters; you, who "have no business with his private life, so long as his manners are gentlemanly;" you who, while saying this, turn away with bitter, unwomanly words from his penitent, writhing victim. I ask no leave of *you* to speak of the wretched girls picked out of the gutters of New York streets, to inhabit those cells at Blackwell's Island. I speak not to *you* of what was tugging at my heart-strings as I saw them, that beautiful summer afternoon, file in, two by two, to their meals, followed by a man carrying a cowhide in his hand, by way of reminder; all this would not interest you; but when you tell me that these women are not to be named to ears polite, that our sons and our daughters should grow up ignorant of their existence, I stop my ears. As if they could, or did! As if they can take a step in the public streets without being jostled or addressed by them, or pained by their passing ribaldry; as if they could return from a party or concert at night, without meeting droves of them; as if they could, even in broad daylight, sit down to an ice-cream without having one for a *vis-à-vis*. As if they could ride in a car or omnibus, or cross in a ferry-boat, or go to a watering-place, without being unmistakably confronted by them. No, Mrs. Grundy; you know all this as well as I do. You would push them "anywhere out of the world," as unfit to live, as unfit to die; *they*, the weaker party, while their partners in sin,

for whom you claim greater mental superiority, and who, by your own finding, should be much better able to learn and *to teach* the lesson of self-control – to them you extend perfect absolution. Most consistent Mrs. Grundy, get out of my way while I say what I was going to, without fear or favor of yours.

If I believed, as legislators, and others with whom I have talked on this subject, pretend to believe, they best know why, that God ever made one of those girls for the life they lead, for this in plain Saxon is what their talk amounts to, I should curse Him. If I could temporize as they do about it, as a "necessary evil," and "always has been, and always will be," and (then add this beautiful tribute to manhood) "that pure women would not be safe were it not so" – and all the other budget of excuses which this sin makes to cover its deformity – I would forswear my manhood.

You say their intellects are small, they are mere animals, naturally coarse and grovelling, Answer me this – are they, or are they not *immortal*? Decide the question whether *this* life is to be *all* to them. Decide before you shoulder the responsibility of such a girl's future. Granted she has only *this* life. God knows how much misery may be crowded into that. But you say, "Bless your soul, why do you talk to *me*? I have nothing to do with it; I am as virtuous as St. Paul." St. Paul was a bachelor, and of course is not my favorite apostle; but waiving that, I answer, you *have* something to do with it when you talk thus, and throw your influence on the wrong side. No matter how outwardly correct your past life may have been, if you *really believe* what you say, I

would not give a fig for your virtue if temptation and opportunity favored; and if you talk so for talk's sake, and do not believe it, you had better "tarry at Jericho till your beard be grown."

But you say to me, "Oh, you don't know anything about it; men are differently constituted from women; woman's sphere is home." That don't suspend the laws of her being. That don't make it that she don't need sympathy and appreciation. That don't make it that she is never weary and needs amusement to restore her. Fudge. I believe in no difference that makes this distinction. Women lead, most of them, lives of unbroken monotony; and have much more need of exhilarating influences than men, whose life is out of doors in the breathing, active world. Don't tell me of shoemakers at their lasts, and tailors at their needles. Do either ever have to lay down their customers' coats and shoes fifty times a day, and wonder when the day is over why their work is *not* done, though they have struggled through fire and water to finish it? Do not both tailor and shoemaker have at least the variation of a walk to or from the shop to their meals? Do not their customers talk their beloved politics to them while they stitch, and do not their "confrères" run for a bottle of ale and crack merry jokes with them as their work progresses? Sirs! if monotony is to be avoided in man's life as injurious, if "variety" and exhilaration must always be the spice to his pursuits, how much more must it be necessary to a sensitively organized woman? If home is not sufficient (and I will persist that any *industrious, virtuous, unambitious* man, may

have a home if he chooses); if home is not sufficient for him, why should it suffice for her? whose work is never done – who can have literally *no* such thing as system (and here's where a mother's discouragement comes in), while her babes are in their infancy; who often says to herself at night, though she would not for worlds part with one of them, "I can't tell what I have accomplished to-day, and yet I have not been idle a minute;" and day after day passes on in this way, and perhaps for weeks she does not pass the threshold for a breath of air, and yet men talk of "monotony!" and being "differently constituted," and needing amusement and exhilaration; and "business" is the broad mantle which it is not always safe for a wife to lift. I have no faith in putting women in a pound, that men may trample down the clover in a forty-acre lot. But enough for that transparent excuse.

The great Law-giver made no distinction of sex, as far as I can find out, when he promulgated the seventh commandment, nor should we. You tell me "society makes a difference;" more shame to it – more shame to the women who help to perpetuate it. You tell me that infidelity on the wife's part involves an unjust claim upon the husband and provider; and I ask you, on the other hand, if a good and virtuous wife has not a right to expect *healthy* children?

Let both be equally pure; let every man look upon every woman, whatsoever her rank or condition, as a sister whom his manhood is bound to protect, even, if need be, against herself, and let every woman turn the cold shoulder to any man of

her acquaintance, how polished soever he may be, who would degrade her sex. Then this vexed question would be settled; there would be no such libels upon womanhood as I saw at Blackwell's Island, driven in droves to their cells. No more human traffic in those gilded palaces, which our children must not hear mentioned, forsooth! though their very fathers may help to support them, and which our tender-hearted legislators "can't see their way clear about." Then our beautiful rivers would no longer toss upon our island shores the "dead bodies of unfortunate young females."

SHALL WE HAVE MALE OR FEMALE CLERKS?

The question whether male or female clerks in stores are preferred by shopping ladies, has lately been agitated. I do not hesitate to say that the majority of ladies would much prefer the former.

There are reasons for this, apart from the natural and obvious preference which women entertain for a coat and vest, before a chignon and panier. Male clerks, as a general thing, confine their attention to business; in other words, "mind what they are about." Female clerks are too often taking an inventory of the way you dress your hair; of the cut and trimming, and probable cost of your sacque and dress. No lady who shops much can be unaware of the coroner's inquest, favorable or otherwise, thus held over the dry-goods on her back. When you add to this the momentous computations, whether her jewelry is bogus or real, and where she got that love of a bonnet, there is grave room for fear lest by mistake she should roll you up two yards of ribbon instead of three, involving a journey back, to the disgust of yourself and your dress-maker; or, worse still, if the day be stormy, oblige you to coax your *dear* Charles to let you pin a sample on the lappel of his coat, and beg him just to stop a minute – there's a dear fellow – as he comes up town, and bring it to you. Of course, he

gets talking with Tom Jones on politics, and forgets all about it, and only ejaculates, "pshaw!" when your horror-stricken dress-maker asks you for it.

That's how it is, although I get my ears boxed for saying it.

Mind you, I don't say that it is *always* so, no more than it is true that all male clerks attend strictly to the business in hand. Still it is true: that is really the fly in the ointment. In the words of the little hymn,

"It is their nature to."

Women *always* dissect each other the moment they meet, and never leave so much as a hair-pin unmeasured. So, as you can't change their nature, and as the instances are rare in which man, or woman either, can do two things correctly at the same moment, what are you going to do about it?

Having said this much, I am happy to add that I have favorite stores for shopping, where I am served by *female* clerks with a promptness, a politeness, an exactness and a dispatch, not to be exceeded by the best-trained *male* clerk in existence.

As to the silly girls and women who go shopping "for fun," and to make eyes, and chatter with clerks, there is no question how *their* preferences go on this question. We don't count their votes.

For myself, as my time is always limited, I desire *despatch*, first and foremost, with an exactness involving no *postscript* to my shopping; and I would also prefer female clerks, if I could

include this. In fact I am willing, *in any case*, to give my vote for the female clerks, so much do I desire that my own sex should be helped to help themselves.

Fashionable Disease. — The day when it was considered interesting and lady-like to be always ailing has gone by. Good health, fortunately, is the fashion. A rosy cheek is no longer considered "vulgar," and a fair, shapely allowance of flesh on the bones is considered the "style." Perhaps the great secret that good looks cannot exist without good health, may have had something to do with the care now taken to obtain it; whether this be so or not, future generations are the gainers all the same. A languid eye and a waxy, bloodless complexion, may go begging now for admiration. The "elegant stoop" in the shoulders, formerly considered so aristocratic, has also miraculously disappeared. Women walk more and ride less; they have rainy-day suits of apparel, too, which superfluity never was known to exist aforetime, sunshine being the only atmosphere in which the human butterfly was supposed to float. In short, "the fragile women of America" will soon exist only in the acid journal of some English traveller, who will, of course, stick to the by-gone fact as a still present reality, with a dogged pertinacity known only to that amiable nation.

UNKNOWN ACQUAINTANCES

You have none? Then I am sorry for you. Much of my pleasure in my daily walks is due to them. Perhaps you go over the ground mechanically, with only dinner or business in your eye when you shall reach your journey's end. Perhaps you "don't see a soul," as you express it. Perhaps you have no "soul" yourself; only a body, of which you are very conscious, and whose claims upon you outweigh every other consideration. That is a pity. I wouldn't go round that treadmill for all the mines of Golconda. It always makes me think of that melancholy old horse one sees, pawing rotatory wood, at the way stations, on the railroad tracks; and because the sight makes every bone in me ache, my particular window-seat in the car is always sure to command a view of him. Now, come what will, I'll not be that horse. *You* may if you like, and I will cling to my dreams. I sha'n't live in this world forever, and I won't hurry over the ground and never see a sweet face as it flits past me, or a grand one, or a sorrowful one. I won't be deaf to the rippling laugh of a little child or the musical voice of a refined woman. It may be only two words that she shall speak, but they shall have a pleasant significance for me. Then there are strange faces I meet every day which I hope to keep on meeting till I die. Who was such an idiot as to say that "no woman ever sees beauty in another"? I meet every day a face that no man living could admire more than myself; soulful as well as beautiful.

Lovely blue, pensive eyes; golden hair, waving over a pure white forehead; cheeks like the heart of a "blush rose;" and a grieved little rosy mouth, like that of a baby to whom for the first time you deny something, fearing lest it grow too wilful. I think that day lost in which I do not meet that sweet face, framed in its close mourning bonnet. Were I a man it is to that face I should immediately "make love."

Make love? Alas! I did not think how terribly significant was this modern term when I used it. Let no man *make* love to that face. But if there *is* one who *can* be in dead earnest, and *stay so*, I give my consent, provided he will not attempt to change the expression of that mouth.

I have another acquaintance. I don't care to ask "Who *is* that man?" I know that he has *lived* his life and not slept it away. I know that it has been a pure and a good one. It is written in his bright, clear, unclouded eye; in his springing step; in the smile of content upon his lip; in the lift of his shoulders; in the poise of his head; in the free, glad look with which he breathes in his share of the warm sunshine. Were he taken to the bedside of a sick man, it seems to me the very sight of him were health.

I used to have many unknown acquaintances among the little children in the parks; but what with French nurses and silk velvet coats, I have learned to turn my feet elsewhere. It gives me the heart-ache to see a child slapped for picking up a bright autumn leaf, though it *may* chance to be "dirty;" or denied a smooth, round pebble, on account of a dainty little glove that must be

kept immaculate. I get out of temper, and want to call on all their mothers and fight Quixotic battles for the poor little things, as if it would do any good; as if mothers who dress their children that way to play, cared for anything *but* their looks.

Then I have some unknown acquaintances in the yard of a large house in the upper part of Broadway. I never asked who lived in the house; but I thank him for the rare birds of brilliant plumage who walk to and fro in it, or perch upon the window-sills or steps, as proudly conscious of their gay feathers as the belles who rustle past. I love to imagine the beautiful countries they came from, and the flowers that blossomed there, and the soft skies that arched over them. I love to see them pick up their food so daintily, and, with head on one side, eye their many admirers looking through the fence, as if to say – beat *that* if you can in America! Ah! my birdies, stop your crowing; just wait a bit and see how the "*American Eagle*" is going to come out, and how each time they who have tried to clip his wings have only found that it made them grow broader and stronger. Soft skies and sweet flowers are very nice things, birdies; but rough winds and freedom are better for the soul.

I have said nothing of unknown acquaintances among my favorite authors. How many times – did I not so hate the sight of a pen when "school is let out" – have I longed to express to them my love and gratitude. Nor, judging by myself, could I ever say, "they do not need it;" since there are, or should be, moments in the experience of all writers when they regard with a

dissatisfied eye what they have already given to the world, when sympathetic, appreciative words, warm from the heart, are hope and inspiration to the receiver.

A Link between Husbands and Wives. – Blessed be the little children who make up so unconsciously our life-disappointments. How many couples, mutually unable to bear each other's faults, or to forbear the causes of irritation, find solace for their pain in these golden links which still continue to unite them. On that they are one. *There* they can really repose. Those fragile props keep them from quite sinking disheartened by life's roadside. How often has a little hand drawn amicably together two else-unwilling ones, and made them see how bright and blessed earth may become in pronouncing that little word – "forgive."

LIFE AND ITS MYSTERIES

Was there ever a romance in that man or that woman's life? I *used* to ask myself, as I looked upon a hard face which stoicism seemed to have frozen over, through the long years. Was there ever a moment when, for that man, or woman, love transfigured everything, or the want of it threw over the wide earth the pall of unrest? Have they ever wept, or laughed, or sighed, or clasped hands in passionate joy or sorrow? *Had* they any life? Or have they simply vegetated like animals? Did they see any beauty in rock, mountain, sky, or river, or was this green earth a browsing place, nothing more?

I never ask those questions now; for I know how much fire may be hidden under a lava-crust exterior. I know that though the treasure-chest *may* sometimes be locked when it is empty, oftener beneath the fastening lies the wealth, which the right touch can at any moment set free. There are divers masks worn in this harlequin world of ours. Years ago I met, in travelling, a lady who seemed to me the very embodiment of fun and frolic. Like a humming-bird, she never was still; alighting now here, now there, wheresoever were sunshine, sweetness and perfume. One day, as we were rambling in the woods, we sat down to rest under a tree, after our frolicking. Some little word of mine, as I drew her head into my lap, and smoothed the hair on her temples, transformed her. With a sharp, quick cry of agony, she

threw her arms about my neck, weeping as I never saw a woman weep. When she was quiet came the sad story. The trouble battled with, and bravely borne. The short, joyous years – then the long days, and nights, and weeks, and months, so full of desolation and bitterness, and life yet at its meridian. How should she meet the long, slow-moving years? That was the question she asked me. "Tell me how! you who know – tell me how!"

And this was the woman I thought frivolous and pleasure-seeking. Wearing beneath that robe the penitential cross, reminding her at every moment with its sharp twinge of pain, that try as she might, she could never fly from herself.

How often, when I have been inclined to judge harshly, have I thought of that Gethsemane cry. It is sorrowful how we misjudge each other in this busy world. How very near we may be to a warm heart, and yet be frozen! How carelessly we pass by the pool of Bethesda, with its waiting crowd, without thinking that we might be the angel to trouble the waters? This thought is often oppressive to me in the crowd of a city hurrying home at nightfall. What burden does this man or that woman carry, known only to their Maker? How many among them may be just at the dividing line between hope and despair! And how some faces remind you of a dumb animal, who bears its pain meekly and mournfully, yet cringing lest some careless foot should, at any moment, render it unendurable; haunting you as you go to your home as if you were verily guilty in ignoring it.

Have you never felt this? and, although you may have been

cheated and imposed upon seventy times seven, can you wholly stifle it? and *ought* you to try, even though you know how well the devil can wear the livery of heaven?

I think it is this that, to the reflecting and observing, makes soul and body wear out so quickly in the city. These constantly recurring, unsolvable problems, which cloud faith and make life terrible, instead of peaceful and sweet; which lead us sometimes to look upon the little child, so dear to us, with such cowardly fear, that it would be a relief to lay it, then and there, in the arms of the Good Shepherd, lest *it*, too, stray away from the fold.

Swearers and Swearing. – Profanity is such a *cheap* accomplishment! "Damme!" "Damn it!" The idea that "*gentlemen*," so called, should use these expletives, in which the commonest laborer, who can scarcely "make his mark" to a document, can excel him! As a matter of taste, setting aside any question of morality, the practice of it by "cultivated persons" is our daily wonder.

MRS. WASHINGTON'S ETERNAL KNITTING

There are many-sided men and women, and there are men and women that are one-sided, both in brains and body. There are men of business who have no surplus left after attending to their business. There are women who have no surplus left after attending to their kettles and pans and their mending basket. On the other hand, there are men whom business does not wholly absorb; who are interested intelligently, and actively, too, in every great question of the day and hour. There are women who order their houses discreetly, tastefully, and economically, and can yet converse elegantly and with knowledge with the most cultured persons of both sexes.

This is a preface to some little remarks of mine on an article lately written by a gentleman in one of our Magazines, on the wife of General (Cherry-Tree) Washington.

This writer says that Mrs. Washington's "knitting was never out of her hands; that when callers came, the click of her needles was always an accompaniment to her conversation. That she deemed it a privilege to attend to the details of housekeeping, and regarded the days when her official position required her presence in the drawing-room as *lost*."

Now she is a specimen of what I should call a one-sided

woman. I am glad she was an accomplished housekeeper, and better still, was not above attending to her duty there. It was splendid, in her high position, that she should set so good an example in this regard. But it was *not* good to keep her needles clicking when callers came, as if to say, You are an intruder, and I can ill endure your presence. This, I maintain, was neither necessary nor polite. It was *not* good that she could consider her "drawing-room days" as lost, and not perceive that they might be turned to account in elevating, as an intelligent woman can, the tone of the society she moved in. That she took the contrary view of it shows, to my thinking, that she was *not* truly an intelligent woman. I believe her duty, as the wife of an American President, lay there quite as much as in looking over her household economies. But that was *Then*, and this is *Now*! In those days one-sided men and women were plenty, and many-sided men and women rare. We can point to-day to many glorious examples of the latter, thank Heaven.

It was once considered a disgrace to a woman to know enough to spell correctly; and if, in addition to committing this indiscretion, she happened to disgrace herself by a knowledge of French or Latin, let her never speak of it, lest it should "destroy her chances of marriage." The idea is losing ground that a woman's mentality perils puddings and shirt-buttons. There have been too many shining, tasteful houses and well-ordered tables presided over by cultivated women, for any man nowadays to drag up that old fogysm, without raising a laugh for himself.

When I read this article about Mrs. Washington, who, I admit, was excellent as far as she went, I called the writer to an account. He replied, "Oh, I knew you'd pitch into me, Fanny;" and not liking to disappoint him, I have.

Religious Tolerance. — It would do no harm if Christians who are disposed to judge harshly of each other, were to read occasionally the accounts handed down to us of enormities committed some centuries ago, and even in later years, in the name of religion, upon those of differing creeds; the perpetrators sincerely believing at the time that they were doing God service. When we are tempted to shut the gate of heaven in any fellow-mortal's face, let us recall these things, at which humanity and Christianity should alike shudder. Said a good old man, in dying, of a son who had embraced another faith than that taught him, "Well, it matters not by which road John gets to heaven, if he only reaches it at last." It seems to us that this, taken rightly, is the true spirit.

THE WOMAN QUESTION

I have been sitting here, enjoying a quiet laugh all by myself, over a pile of newspapers and magazines, in which the "Woman Question" was aired according to the differing views of editors and writers. One gentleman thinks that the reason the men take a nap on the sofa, evenings at home, or else leave it to go to naughty places, is because there are no Madame De Staëls in our midst to make home attractive. He was probably a bachelor, or he would understand that when a man who has been perplexed and fretted all day, finally reaches home, the last object he wishes to encounter is a wide awake woman of the Madame De Staël pattern, propounding her theories on politics, theology, and literature. The veriest idiot who should entertain him by the hour with tragic accounts of broken tea-cups and saucepans, would be a blessing compared to her; not that he would like that either; not that he would know himself exactly what he *would* like in such a case, except that it should be something diametrically opposite to that which years ago he got on his knees to solicit.

Another writer asserts that women's brains are too highly cultivated at the present day; and that they have lost their interest in the increase of the census; and that their husbands, not sharing their apathy, hence the disastrous result. I might suggest in answer that this apathy may have its foundation in the idea so fast gaining ground – thanks to club-life, and that which answers to

it in a less fashionable strata of society – that it is an indignity to expect fathers of families to be at home, save occasionally to sleep, or eat, or to change their apparel; and that, under such circumstances, women naturally prefer to be the mother of four children, or none, than to engineer seventeen or twenty through the perils of childhood and youth without assistance, co-operation, or sympathy.

Another writer thinks that women don't "smile" enough when their husbands come into the house; and that many a man misses having his shirt or drawers taken from the bureau and laid on a chair all ready to jump into at some particular day or hour, as he was accustomed when he lived with some pattern sister or immaculate aunt at home. This preys on his manly intellect, and makes life the curse it is to him.

Another asserts that many women have some female friend who is very objectionable to the husband, in exerting a pugilistic effect on her mind, and that he flees his house in consequence of this unholy influence; not that this very husband wouldn't bristle all over at the idea of his wife's court-martialing a bachelor or benedict friend, for the same reason; but then it makes a difference, you know, a man not being a woman.

Another writer asserts that nobody yet knows what woman is capable of doing. I have only to reply that the same assertion cannot be made with regard to men, as the dwellers in great cities, at least, know that the majority of them are capable of doing anything that the devil and opportunity favor.

It has been a practice for years to father every stupid joke that travels the newspaper-round on "*Paddy*" – poor "*Paddy*." In the same way it seems to me that for every married man now, who proves untrue to his better nature, *his wife* is to be held responsible. It is the old cowardly excuse that the first man alive set going, and which has been travelling round this weary world ever since. "The woman thou gavest to be with me" —*she* did thus and so; and therefore all the Adams from that time down have whimpered, torn their hair, and rushed forth to the long-coveted perdition, over the bridge of this cowardly excuse.

One of the sapient advisers of women ridicules the idea of a woman's voting till she has learned to be "moderate" in following the fashions; moderate in her household expenses; moderate in her way of dressing her hair; moderate in the length of her party-rob and in the shortness of her walking costume. Till woman has attained this desirable moderation he declares her totally unfit for the ballot.

Granted – for the sake of the argument, granted; but as it is a poor rule that won't work both ways, suppose we determine a man's fitness for the ballot by the same rule. Let not his short-tailed coats refuse to be sat upon by the fat owner thereof. Let not his pantaloons be so tight that he cannot stoop without danger. Let not his overcoat flap against his heels, because a new-fangled custom demands an extra inch or two. Let not the crown of his hat pierce the skies, or be so ridiculously shallow as to convey the idea that it belongs to his little son. Let him

smoke "moderately." Let him drink "moderately." Let him drive "moderately." Let him stock-gamble "moderately." Let him stay out at night "moderately." Let him, in short, prepare himself by a severe training in the virtue of "moderation" for the privilege of casting a vote.

Why, there is not a man in the land who wouldn't sniff at the idea! and yet I suppose it never occurred to the writer of this advice to women that he was uttering impertinent nonsense, or that the rules he laid down were quite as well suited to his own sex as to ours.

Every day I see gentlemen who are as much walking advertisements of their tailor's last exaggerated fashion as any foolish woman could be of her dress-maker's newly fledged insanity. If Bismarck be the rage, or Metternich green, their neckties and gloves slavishly follow Fashion's behest. Hats, coats, trousers are long-tail or short, tight or loose, as she bids; and that whether legs are straight or crooked, whether the outline is round or angular, whether the owner looks like an interrogation-point, or a tub on two legs. At least he is in the fashion – that manly thought consoles him.

If "moderation" in smoking were the test of fitness for the ballot-box, how many men do you think would be able to vote?

Oh, pshaw! Advice to women will go in at one ear and out at the other, while male advisers are such egregious fools. The silliest woman who ever cleaned the streets with her silken robe, or exhibited thick ankles in a short one, or froze her ears in

January in a saucer of a bonnet, knows that she can find a parallel for all her nonsense in the male side of the question. Men inhabit too many glass-houses for them at present to hurl missiles of that sort at their fair neighbors. Reform *yourselves*, gentlemen. *You* who are so much mightier and stronger and more competent, *by your own showing*, show us, poor, weak, "grown-up children" how to behave pretty!

A Word for the Little Ones. – Have one rough suit for your little ones, this summer, to tumble about the dirt in. The amount of happiness they will get out of that rough suit, and their liberty in it, is not to be computed by any parent's arithmetic. Only a child brought up to city pavements and fine clothes can add up that sum. Will you do it, mothers? Just for this one summer, if no more. Leave off for a time the sashes and laces, and let the little ones get happily, and, what is better, *healthily* dirty.

TWO KINDS OF WIVES

Some writer remarks, "We blunder fearfully with our domesticity in America. Our wives are only of two kinds: the family slave on one hand; the frivolous woman of fashion on the other!"

"*Our wives!*" As a *woman* can't have a "wife," I may logically infer that a man wrote the above paragraph, though without these two helping words I should have come to the same conclusion. Now so far as my limited knowledge goes, we generally find "in the market" that which is oftenest called for. Put that down in your memorandum book, sir. Men are but just beginning to find out that the two specimens of womankind referred to are much more difficult to get along with, in the main, than a woman of intelligence and mentality. I say they are just *beginning* to understand it. Men are very fond of the results that the "family slave" brings about, in the shape of good food and well-mended clothes, but they dodge with a fox's cunning the creaking and jarring of the machinery by which these results are obtained. They never want to be on hand when any process of disentanglement is necessary that defies temporarily the "family slave." Just then "business" is imperative – very likely in the shape of a journey – till the household machine runs smoothly again; nor does he care to hear how it is done, so that he is not bothered about it. If the "family slave" gets thinner and thinner,

why, it is because "she takes everything *so hard*." She ought not to take things hard! That's her fault! It is an unfortunate nervousness which she ought to try to get rid of, because – it worries *him*! She is "no companion" for him – not a bit! When he wants to be amused, she is too tired to do it. In fact she don't see anything to be amused at. That is another unfortunate peculiarity of hers, this looking on the dark side of things. *He* don't do so. Not he! He deplores it; he sits down and writes just such a paragraph as I have just quoted above, like the consistent man he is.

I once heard a man who was in excellent circumstances, and whose young wife, just recovered from a severe illness, had taken her twelve-pound baby in her weak arms, and gone into the country for a few days, remark, as she left, "She *would* take all my old trousers with her to mend – God bless her!" adding, hallelujah-wise, "*There's a wife for you!*"

Now who made *that* "family slave"? Because she was magnanimous and self-forgetful, must he need be a brute? Women must take care of themselves in these matters. They must husband their strength for future demands, since their husbands won't husband it. That man was abundantly able to pay a tailor or a seamstress to repair his clothes. Instead of contenting himself with God-blessing this little meek wife, he should, like a true man, have positively *forbidden* her to work at all, in this short reprieve from household care. When there is nothing left of her but one front tooth, and a back, bent like the letter C, he will contemplate some round, rosy woman, who has not yet met her

doom, and wonder how his wife came "to lose all her good looks so soon."

As to "fashionable women," were there no fashionable men, I don't imagine that they would exist on this planet. "She is so dowdy!" "She is so stylish!" Do you suppose the women who hear these masculine comments forget them? And do you suppose when, to use an equine expression, you have once given a wife "her head," by your admiration of "style" and fashion, that you can rein her up short, whenever you take a notion? Don't she hear you sneering at intelligent women, and don't she see you flattering fashionable fools?

Of course she does. Now let every man ask himself, before he sits down to write against the faults and follies of women, what he, individually, has done to form and perpetuate them? And if ever, in his whole life, when he saw a woman wronging her better self in *any* way, he extended a manly, brotherly hand to her, in the endeavor to lead her right? or, if he did not, on the contrary, join her, and walk with her, *well pleased*, in her own ill-selected path.

UNDERTAKERS' SIGNS ON CHURCHES

It may strike *you* pleasantly, but when I am about to enter a church, the conspicuous intelligence upon its outside walls, that the "undertaker may be found at such a street," is anything but a pleasant announcement. Now not being myself a theologian of that school which compels a smiling countenance to be left at the *porch* of the "meetin'-house," I can, therefore, by no means indorse any gloomy surroundings, outside or inside.

One of the principal articles of *my* creed is, that Sunday should be the pleasantest day of all the week. When I open my eyes to its dawn, I always rejoice, if instead of a gray, cloudy sky, it be a lovely blue, and the sun be shining brightly; I think upon the thousands to whom this day is the only leisure day of all the seven; the thousands who, without this blessed rest, would scarcely have time to look upon the faces of wife or children; scarcely time to receive the regenerating caresses of little twining arms, or hear the recital of little griefs and joys which it is so blessed to share with one who never wearies in the hearing, and to whose fatherly ear nothing a little child can say is "trifling." It is blessed to me to think of the thousand humble homes where the Sabbath sun shines upon just such a scene as this; preaching *through the family* this simple gospel: that the humblest have those for whom they

must strive to leave the legacy of a good and honest name. Now when a working-man, with his heart full of love and happiness, walks forth on a Sunday morning, do you think it wise when he approaches a church to shake a coffin in his face? Had I my way, I would tear these undertaker-placards all down to-morrow, and instead, I would write this, "Strangers furnished with free seats here every Sunday." Were I a clergyman, an undertaker should no more use my church walls to advertise his business, than the upholsterer who furnished the pew-cushions, or the bookseller who provided the hymn-books, or the man who found the gas-fixtures. Ah! but you say it is very convenient to know where the sexton lives. Very well, so it is; but let him advertise in the papers, as other people do, who have no convenient church walls to save their advertising fees. The truth is, that the whole undertaker business, as at present managed, is monstrously mis-managed. The other day, in one of our streets, I saw an oyster shop with heaps of bivalves curiously arranged in the window, over which was written: "*Live and let live.*" Next door, being an undertaker, he had piled ostentatiously *his* wares, consisting of heaps of "fancy coffins," in his show-window. If he had only copied his bivalve-neighbor, so far as to write over the window, *Die and let die*, the farce would have been complete.

They who please may sniff at Sunday. To us it is a blessed reprieve from care and business, and worry of every sort. The very putting on of the fresh, clean, "best" raiment, is suggestive of best thoughts and best feelings for all whom we meet, and more

than all, for the dear ones at home, whose happiness it is ours to make or to mar. Then the sweet, soothing hymn and the pleading prayer; and the sermon, in which it were hard, as a rule, to find nothing that we could not take home with us for our improvement and self-help. Then the pleasant family group at table, where the children *should* be. Ah! *we* are glad for this blessed Sunday, let him who will, decry or pervert it.

A Pitiab! Sight. – There is no more pitiable sight than that of a husband and father reeling home at the end of the week, having left the greater part of his week's wages at some drinking saloon. We think of the patient, toiling wife and hungry children, and the miserable Sunday, and the coming week in store for them, and the utter hopelessness of their future lot, and can find no words of denunciation strong enough for the man who grows rich by tempting a brother's weakness, knowing, when he does so, that for his victim there is in this world no redemption.

A VOICE FROM THE SKATING POND

Coats and trousers have the best of it *everywhere*, I exclaimed, for the thousandth time, as I looked at the delightful spectacle of the male and female skaters at the Central Park. Away went coat and trousers, like a feather before the wind; free, and untrammelled by dry-goods, and independent of any chance somerset; while the poor, skirt-hampered women glided circumspectly after their much-needed health and robustness, with that awful omnipresent sense of *the proprieties*, (and – horror of horrors – a tumble!) which sends more of the dress-fettered sex to their graves every year than any disease *I* wot of. That a few women whom I saw there had had the perseverance to become tolerable skaters, with all that mass of dry-goods strung round their waists, is infinitely to their credit. How much *longer* and better they could have skated, disembarrassed, as men are, of these swaddling robes, common sense will tell anybody. I should like to see how long a *man's* patience would hold out, floundering round in them, while *he* learned to skate! And yet were a lady to adopt any other costume, how decent soever, or how eminently soever befitting the occasion, what a rolling of eyes and pursing of mouths should we see from the strainers at gnats and swallowers of camels. All these thoughts passed

through my mind as I mixed in with the merry crowd on that bracing winter day, whose keen breath was like rare old wine, so did it stir and warm the blood; and I wondered, as I gazed at those dress-fettered women, whether those heathen nations who strangled their female babies at birth were as naughty as we had been told they were!

"Why don't *you* get up a skating costume, Fanny, and set them an example?" whispers a voice at my elbow. *Me?* why don't *I*? Because, sir, custom has made me a poor, miserable coward in these matters, like the rest of my sex, and because, moreover, sir, you would have no more courage to walk by my side in such a costume, than I should have to wear it. No, no: a crowd of curious men in my wake would be no more agreeable in reality than it is in perspective. It is brave *talking*, I know, but the time has not yet come when men, by refraining from rude remarks on a female pioneer in such a cause, would remove one of the chief obstacles to its advancement. They "like healthy women" – oh, of course they do! but then, unfortunately, they like dainty prettiness of attire much better. Else, why don't they encourage women when they try to do a sensible thing? Why do they grin, and stroke their beards, and shrug their shoulders, and raise their eyebrows, and go home to Jane Maria, and say, "Let me catch *you* out in such a costume"? Till all that is done away with, we must be content to see puny, waxy-looking children, and read in "Notes on America" the usual number of stereotyped pages on "the fragility of our women." Now, let me say in closing that

I don't wish to be misunderstood on this matter. I approve of no costume which a delicate-minded, self-respecting, dignified woman might not wear in public. But I will insist that nothing *can* be done in the way of reform, while husbands and fathers and brothers *sniff* the whole subject "under the table" as soon as it is mentioned. May every one of them have a yearly doctor's bill to pay as long as the moral law!

Bearing Trouble. — There are persons who emerge from every affliction and trouble and vexation, purified like fine gold from out the furnace. There are others, and they are the more numerous, who are embittered and soured, and made despondent and apathetic. We think the latter belong to the class who *try to stand alone* during these storms of life, instead of looking above for aid. When one can truly say, "He doeth all things well," the sting is taken out of affliction, the tears are dried, and the courage given to bear what the future has in store. This, we think, makes the great difference between these two classes.

THE SIN OF BEING SICK

I wish women could be made to understand the importance of flannel under-clothing, and warm outer-clothing, and common-sense generally in food and exercise, when they talk about longing to have a "profession" or a "career." Not that good health should not always be a sort of religion with them; but they should remember that what failings soever men may have, as a general thing they are not such fools as to shiver in insufficient clothing when other may be had, or to go with wet or cold feet, because thick stockings "fill up the boot," or reject thick-soled boots because they make the feet look a size or two larger. They do not, either, think it attractive to bare their throats and necks to a biting wind in the street, thus inviting a blue nose and the pitying contempt of every beholder. Woman's great foe, "headache," is surely invited and perpetuated by these follies, even if no worse punishment follows. "I am so shivery all over!" you will hear these silly creatures exclaim, and the red and white located in the wrong spots in their faces attest the truth of it. One would think that, as a matter upon which their much-valued good looks depend, they would "consider their ways, and be wise;" but no. After this they come in and call for some "hot, strong tea." Tea! *that woman's dram!* morning, noon, and night. It makes her "feel like another being," she says. I'm sure it makes her *act* like one. This lasts an hour, perhaps; then she has such a "gnawing at her

stomach." Then follows depression after the exhilaration. Then she eats nothing, because she has "no appetite." Then – another cup of tea, to "set her up," as she calls it.

I should like to see such a woman having any "career," except fitting herself speedily for a lunatic asylum. Such a course is reprehensible and suicidal enough, when good food is at hand and enough of it, and the women who practise it have money enough to pay a doctor to come and see them, and tell them lies, and give them nice messes to make believe cure them. But unfortunately our working girls and women, who have only a hospital bed to look forward to when sick, go on after the same crazy fashion. There is some shadow of excuse with them for their intemperate use of *tea*; the horrible fare of their boarding-places being so unpalatable and disgusting, and their long hours of labor so exhaustive and discouraging that this stimulant has become *seemingly* necessary to their existence – the one bit of comfort and luxury that they look forward to with eagerness in the interval of work. "I can't do without it," said a young shop-girl to me, when I remonstrated with her on its use, morning, noon, and night. "I couldn't do my work without it." And how did she spend the wages received for "her work"? In a flimsy, showy dress; in a gay hat; in a fashionable pair of boots with high heels. Meantime she had no flannel; she had no *thick* boots; she had no warm outer garments; she had nothing to insure either health or comfort, and she was in the same alternatives of exhilaration and depression as her richer sisters of whom I have spoken. I don't

know why, either, that I should call them "richer," except that *they* could have a rosewood coffin with silver nails, and be buried in a fashionable cemetery, while the working-girl would have a pine one, and sleep her long sleep in the Potter's Field. Oh, dear! I see all these abuses, and I exclaim, Oh, the rare and priceless blessings of good health and common-sense! How I wish that every clergyman in our land – only that I know that in many cases they are as great sinners themselves in the matter of health – would preach on the *sin of being sick*.

Now *there's* a topic for those of them who have the face to speak of it, and a clear conscience to bear them out in it. For those of them who don't sit in their libraries smoking till you can't see across it, when they should be knocking about in the open air, cultivating a breezy, sunny, healthful state of mind and body – just the same as if they were laymen, instead of "ministers," whom the devil desires, of all things, to see solemn and dyspeptic.

I lately read an article in one of our papers headed, "*Have we a Healthy Woman among us?*" I fully indorse what the writer says as to the marvellous amount of invalidism among our girls and women, and I deplore it as sincerely as he does. But let us have fair play on this subject. If there are few of them who ever ought to be wives and mothers, I ask, how much better qualified – physiologically speaking – are the young *men* of the present day to be husbands and fathers? Go to any physician of large practice and experience, and if he answers you frankly and truthfully, you will learn that it is six of one and half a dozen of the other. When

boys of eight and twelve go to school with a satchel in one hand and a cigar in the other, I wouldn't give much for their future vitality, even without leaving a margin for other violations of the laws of health. It would be well, while publicly deploring "tight lacing" and "tight shoes" for girls, privately to inquire about the practice of smoking for boys in short-jackets. To be sure, I cannot see with what face a father, who is himself a bond-slave to this habit, can ask his boy to refrain from doing that which he, as a man, has not had self-control enough to accomplish. But don't let him then write or speak dolefully about the miserable ill-health of our girls and women, not, at least, till he moves out of his own "glass-house." If the *truthful* inscriptions were placed upon the myriad little graves in our cemeteries, it would be *fathers*, not *mothers*, in many cases, who could not read them without pangs of remorse.

The day will, I hope, come, when the marriage question will cease to be decided by Cupid or cupidity; when parents, and lovers, themselves, will consider a sound, healthy body to be of primary importance. Oh! the weary years of watching and dosing and misery for two, consequent upon the neglect of this precaution! Oh! the army of puny and idiotic children, doomed, if they live to adult years, to be a blight in themselves and to all around them! And how distressing is it to see a wife, made gloriously as a woman should be, with a broad chest, a free, firm, graceful step and a beaming face, married to a man whose only claim to be a living being is, that he has not yet ceased to breathe!

And still as mournful is it, to look at a kingly man, whose very presence is so full of life that it is like stepping from a close room into the glad, free, balmy sunshine even to come where he is, married to a little pink-eyed, feeble dwarf of a creature, with little paws like a bird's, and not life enough left even to chirp to him.

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" as the pre-Raphaelite friend asked of a disconsolate widow who kept on crying for her dead husband.

That's just the point where I want to bring *you*, my reader. I want you individually to look first for good health in the chosen wife who is to be the mother of your children. And you, young girl, look first for that rarity, a *clean bill of health*, with your future husband. A brown-stone house and a carriage and livery are nothing to it. Take my advice. Don't take copper for gold on the health question, and *don't give it*.

ARE MINISTERS SERFS?

We hear a great outcry occasionally about "ministers who work outside of their profession," as it is called – that is, in the lecture field, or in writing newspaper or magazine articles for pay, or in editing newspapers; and this although the ministers thus censured are faithful to their pastoral duties, and bring forth every Sunday, and during the week, fresh, vigorous thoughts for the profit and pleasure of these complainers.

Now in our view this is a great impertinence.

Suppose a clergyman has a decrepit mother or sister, whose only pecuniary reliance is himself? Suppose he is not willing, from delicacy toward them, to turn his family affairs inside out, and explain *why* he does this "outside work," which may enable him to meet this or some similar outside demand? *Is it* properly anybody's business? If he do not defraud his parish, have they any right to hold a coroner's inquest over his "outside" earnings and their possible appropriation? How would his deacons or church-members stand such a scrutiny over their own private affairs? We think that the "old Adam" in them would soon rear and plunge at it. Well, ministers are men too, though you sometimes seem to forget it; and *they* don't like it either. The parish has not purchased their *souls*, as I understand it, no more than have husbands those of their wives. Let us hope, in this enlightened age, that neither are serfs. Let us hope that all ministers, and all

wives too, all over the land, may honestly and innocently earn money, and keep it in a private purse too, without accounting to either the parish or their husbands for the expenditure of the same; or without, in either case, causing unfounded suspicion or breach of the peace, or officious meddling, no more, in my opinion, to be justified, than as if the "boot was on the other foot," where Mrs. Grundy would consider it a great wrong to place it, or to insist upon its being worn, regardless of the limping or contortions of the wearers.

Before either parishes or husbands complain of outside *honest* earnings, let them inquire if the salaries they give are just and ample. Let them both inquire whether the objection they have to outside earning in both cases, does not mainly arise from the fear that the curious public will imagine that they are not.

Of course, in saying all this, I am referring to those clergymen and those married women who are sensible and judicious, as well as blessed with ability, and it is my opinion that Mrs. Grundy has meddled long enough with the proper independence and self-respect of both.

One thing I've forgotten, namely, parishes are not to suppose that an increase of a clergyman's salary is to padlock his lips afterward, if he is requested, or if he feels inclined, to deliver his sentiments, even "for pay," on the platform, as well as in the pulpit they have called him to fill. Nor after that, are they to handcuff him either, lest he should write a line "for pay" in a paper or magazine? In short, do try to be willing that your

"minister" should stand up straight like any other man, and not go cringing round the world a bought serf, with his "white choker" for a badge of the same. I'm sick of seeing it. If I were a minister, it would take all the religion I could muster to keep me from saying wicked words about it.

"Our minister was away six weeks this summer," said a person complainingly, the other day. Well, are not ministers human? Must they not eat, drink, rest, sleep, sorrow and grieve, like other mortals? Have they not, in addition to all this, a constant and exhaustive demand upon their sympathies for the griefs of other people? And must they not constantly be racking their brains, in and out of the pulpit, to have all their words set fitly, like "apples of gold in pictures of silver"? And is it not better that a minister should rest "six weeks" than be laid useless upon the shelf for six months, or that his voice should be silenced forever because of the exactions of the unthinking portion of his hearers? And would it not be well if the persons thus complaining spent the time instead in looking to it that they had profited by what they had *already* heard?

Whatever else you grudge, never grudge a good, faithful minister a breathing spell.

BLAMING PROVIDENCE FOR OUR OWN FAULTS

Napoleon is said to have lost a battle on account of an underdone leg of mutton. Now, there are many who, shaking their heads, would say, it was "an overruling Providence." I have to smile sometimes at poor "Providence" – that convenient scapegoat for all the human stupidity extant; – who kills little babies, and puts a tombstone over young girls who should have lived to be the healthy mothers of healthy sons and daughters. This "All-wise Providence," who, as some would have us believe, is malignantly and perpetually employed in tripping up the heels of human beings for the benefit of the undertaker – what a convenient theology for bad cooks, for unwise school-teachers, for selfish, careless, ignorant parents!

Now "Providence" does no such things. Providence approves of live, fat, rollicking babies; of deep-chested women; of round, healthy girls; of muscular men; and sound physical specimens of every kind. Bless you —*he* don't bend spines, nor make drunkards, nor thieves, nor write a shameful history on the pure brow of any woman who ever has or ever shall live; *he* don't ordain perpendicular ghosts of ministers, to defile sepulchrally through creation, and scare people into heaven. *He* don't smile on those suicidal mothers, who run breathlessly round and round

the nursery treadmill, thinking they are doing God service, till they drop dead in the harness, and leave eight or nine children motherless, at an age when they most need maternal guidance. *He* don't manufacture scrofulous constitutions out of unwholesome food, and bad ventilation, and dissipated habits. It is *not* one of the ten commandments that babies should be taught Greek and Latin before they have cut their teeth, that they may become idiots before maturity; or that school-boys should smoke pipes and cigars; or that school-girls should drink strong coffee for breakfast, and eat rich pastry and pickles for luncheon. It is high time that people shouldered their own sins, and called things by their right names, and told the truth at funerals, and on tombstones, if they *must* say anything there. In my opinion, an "All-wise and inscrutable Providence" has borne quite blasphemy enough in this way.

A CHAPTER ON NURSES

Can anybody tell why nurses are fat? Is there anything in the atmosphere of a sick room, or in the sight of phials, pills, leeches, potions, blisters, and plasters to give one an appetite? I solemnly affirm that I never saw a bony nurse – never. There's a horrid mystery about it which I have in vain tried to solve. With what a lazy waddle they roll round the apartment, and how your flesh creeps as they fix their unsympathizing eyes upon you; you are so sure that they had just as lief bring you your shroud as a clean nightcap; that it is quite immaterial to them whether the next thing that comes through the door is a bowl of gruel or your coffin; in fact, that they would be immensely gratified if you'd hurry up your dying, and let them off to the pleasurable excitement of a new subject.

And then that professional sniffle when a visitor asks, "How is your patient, nurse?" It is a poor satisfaction, to make faces at her under the sheet, as she answers; but I have done it; I shouldn't be surprised now, if you thought that was unamiable. Ah! you never had her twitch down the curtain over a lovely sunset, that was soothing you like a cool hand on your forehead, and light a little, nasty "nurse-lamp," merely because she knew you hadn't strength enough to say, "Please don't." A nurse-lamp! that you have contemplated night after night in the silent, dreary watches, till it seemed like an evil eye, glimmering and glowing,

fascinating you in spite of yourself, till the perspiration stood in cold drops on your forehead, while the watch went "tick," "tick," and the fat, old nurse snored away, and each nerve in your body seemed a separate and more perfect engine of torture. No wonder you hate to see her unnecessarily shorten the daylight and repeat the horror. But she'll do it; of course she'll do it. If you had not wanted her to, you should have told her that of all sublunary things, you fancied a night-lamp. Now I leave it to you, if, after that and kindred crucifixions of momentary occurrence, you could stand that pious snuffle with which she answers the question, "How is your patient, nurse?"

And then, if she wouldn't be so excruciatingly officious at such a time, one might swallow one's disgust. If, when a visitor comes in, she wouldn't twitch your pillow from under your head, just as you are knowing your first comfortable moment, and giving it a shake and a pat, thrust it under your head again, forcing your chin down into your breastbone, and half dislocating your neck, just to show them how attentive she is; if she wouldn't strip down the blanket, or pile on a dozen quilts, when you are just the right temperature, for the same reason, I think it would be more jolly. Then if, after all that, she wouldn't stand, and *keep* standing, so near the corner of your mouth, that you couldn't call her some "rantankerous" name by way of relief; though, at another time, when you were dying for a glass of water, she'd leave you all alone and take half an hour to get it; if she wouldn't do all these things; but she will. *She grows fat on thwarting her patients: I know it.*

Of course, if your strength equalled your disgust, you wouldn't *be* thwarted; you'd obstinately persist in admiring everything she did, though she should comb your hair with a red-hot poker, but being sick and babyish, one can only whimper; and there is where they have us.

"Ill-natured article." Well, suppose it is an ill-natured article? Am I to be the only saint in the world? Am I to pussy-cat round a subject, and never show my claws, or stick up my back, when I catch sight of the enemy! I cry you mercy; in that case I should have been devoured long ago. Beside, wasn't the handle broken off a lovely little porcelain "gift cup" this morning? and isn't it raining cats and dogs, though I *must* go out? and are not these as good reasons for making somebody uncomfortable as *you* had, Sir, or *you*, Madam, for that little thing you did or said this morning to some poor soul in your power, who couldn't resent it? Please get out of your own glass-house before you throw stones at mine.

"But there are good, kind nurses." Well, I am glad to hear it. Upon my soul, I believe it. Since you say so, and I have had my growl out, I think I remember two or three. They'll go to heaven, of course. What more do you want?

A Reasonable Being. – If there's anything I hate, it is "a reasonable being." Says the lazy mother to her restless child whom she has imprisoned within doors and whose active mind seeks solutions of passing remarks, "Don't bother, Tommy; do be *reasonable*, and not tease with your questions." Says the husband

to his sick or overtasked wife, when she cries from mere mental or physical exhaustion, "How I hate tears; do be a reasonable being." Says the conservative father to his son, whom he would force into some profession or employment for which nature has utterly disqualified him, "Are you wiser than your father? do be a reasonable being." Says the mother to sweet sixteen, whom she would marry to a sixty-five-year old money-bag, "Think what a thing it is to have a fine establishment; do be a reasonable being."

As near as I can get at it, to be a reasonable being, is to laugh when your heart aches; it is to give confidence and receive none; it is faithfully to keep your own promises, and never mind such a trifle as having promises broken to you. It is never to have or to promulgate a dissenting opinion. It is either to be born a fool, or in lack of that to become a hypocrite, trying to become a "reasonable being."

DO AMERICAN WOMEN LOVE NATURE?

I read an article in *The Nation* the other day, in which the writer deplores "that American women are not lovers of Nature." Now, sins enough both of omission and commission are laid to their charge, without adding to the list those that are baseless. "American women not lovers of Nature!" Where does the writer keep his eyes, that he does not see, even here in the city, in mid-winter, the parlor-windows of almost every house he passes, decorated by the American ladies who preside over it, with hanging baskets of flowering plants, with ivies and geraniums tastefully arranged, besides bouquets of fresh-cut flowers always upon the mantel? Even the humblest house will have its cracked pitcher filled with green moss; as if unwilling to do without that little suggestion of Nature, although the fingers which tend it are coarse with washing, or sewing on shirts at six cents apiece. Did the writer never notice the "American women" going up and down Broadway? How impossible it is for them to resist stopping at the street corners to invest a few pennies in the little fragrant bunch of pansies or tuberoses, for private delectation, and the adornment of their own pretty rooms at home! Then, too, I am a great haunter of green-houses and florists' shops generally; whom, by the way, I consider in the light of missionaries in

this work-a-day world, to educate and stimulate our artistic propensities, by the various and beautiful arrangements of form and color, in their floral offerings; and I find there plenty of "American women" enthusiastic in their praises and lavish in their expenditures in this direction. Many of them are flowers themselves, bright, beautiful, lovely, beyond all the buds and sprays and tinted leaves they hover over, like so many humming-birds.

Then, again, when I go into the country each summer, I find "American ladies" rambling in the woods, with a keen appreciation of Nature in all its varied forms, from a lovely sunrise to the last faint chirp of the sleepest little bird who is safely nestled for the night in his leafy little home. I meet them too in the odorous warm autumn noons, with branches and garlands of gay-tinted leaves, so embarrassed with their wealth of richness that they cannot carry more, and yet unwilling to leave so many "*real beauties*" still trembling, unplucked, on the boughs above them. I see them taking infinite pains to press these bright leaves in books prepared for the purpose, that they may beautify their homes for the cold winter days. Sometimes the result of this painstaking is seen in the form of an ingenious lamp-shade, far more beautiful than one could purchase for any amount of money. Then, again, it will be in the leafy frame for a favorite picture; then again in a vase, the grouping of branches and tints in such perfect taste, that the most trained artistic eye could find no flaw or blemish.

Now, with all due deference to *The Nation*, in which this article appeared, I beg leave most emphatically to express a difference in opinion; the more so as this increasing interest in floral decorations, particularly those of the parlor windows, has been a matter of great congratulation with me; since the latter gives pleasure to many a passer-by who has neither the means nor time to spend in aught save the bare necessities of life. How many times I have seen some ragged little shivering child stand, spell-bound, before some sunlit window, gay with blossoming plants, and forgetting for the time the dirt and chill and squalor of her own wretched home! How many times the weary seamstress, resting her bundle upon the fence outside, while her eyes drank in their freshness! How many times the laboring man, with his little child beside him, have I seen, as he raised him upon his shoulder to "see the pretty flowers." And *this* is principally why I rejoice that American women *do* love Nature. Those people who stop to look from the outside, are being educated the while to the beautiful, quite unknown to themselves; and these ladies are providing them this pleasure without cost.

I was very much struck, while in Newport last summer, with the educating effect of the superb floral decorations about the villas of the wealthy in that place; for no house there, how humble soever, but had its little emulative patch of bright flowers, or its climbing vines, or its window bouquet. No, no; *The Nation* must have been taking a Rip Van Winkle nap, I think, when it made this unfounded charge against "American Women."

Good-Night. – How commonplace is this expression, and yet what volumes it may speak for all future time! We never listen to it, in passing, that this thought does not force itself upon us, be the tones in which it is uttered ever so gay. The lapse of a few fatal hours or minutes may so surround and hedge it in with horror, that of all the millions of words which a lifetime has recorded, these two little words alone shall seem to be remembered.

Good-night!

The little child has lisped it, as it passed, smiling, to a brighter morn than ours; the lover, with his gay dreams of the nuptial morrow; the wife and mother, with all the tangled threads of household care still in her fingers; the father, with the appealing eye of childhood all unanswered.

Good-night!

That seal upon days passed, and days to come. What hand so rash as to rend aside the veil that covers its morrow?

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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