

FERN FANNY

GINGER-SNAPS

Fanny Fern

Ginger-Snaps

http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=24727849

Ginger-Snaps:

Содержание

PREFACE	4
DINNER-PARTIES	5
THE BRIDE'S NEW HOUSE	12
THE HAPPY LOT OF A SEXTON	21
LITERARY ASPIRANTS	24
WHAT SHALL WE DO FOR THE LITTLE CHILDREN ON SUNDAY?	30
MY HOUSE IN THE COUNTRY	33
WHY WEAR MOURNING?	37
"DELIGHTFUL MEN."	40
CHOOSING PRESENTS	49
A BID FOR AN EDITORSHIP	54
A SERMON TO PLYMOUTH PULPIT	57
FEMALE CLERKS	60
BLUE MONDAY	63
THE FLY IN THE OINTMENT	71
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	77

Fanny Fern Ginger-Snaps

PREFACE

WHEN I was a little girl, I used to play "make ginger-snaps;" and I always tossed in all the ginger in the spice-box, be it more or less; so if you find these rather biting, attribute it to the force of early habits. Beside, they are not intended for a "square meal;" only to nibble at, in the steamboat, or railroad-car, or under the trees in the country; or when your dear, but tardy John, is keeping you waiting, with your gloves buttoned, and your bonnet-strings tied; or, best of all, when you are sitting in your rocking-chair, nursing that dear little baby. I do not think the milk of human kindness is wanting in these Ginger-Snaps, and I trust they are —*kneaded*.

Fanny Fern.

DINNER-PARTIES

TO fasten as many drags as possible to the social machinery of to-day, seems to be the first idea of hospitality, which, there is every reason to fear, will gradually be smothered in the process.

Perhaps the lady who gives the dinner-party would really prefer a plain dinner with her friend Mrs. Jones, than all the elaborate dinners she is in the habit of giving and attending; but her husband likes wines and French cookery, and would consider anything else a poor compliment to a guest; and so there's an end.

And now, what are these fine dinners? Just this: a pleasant gleam of silver and china; a lovely disposition of fruit and flowers; a great deal of dress, or undress, on the part of the ladies; much swallow-tail, and an exquisite bit of cravat and kid-glove, on the part of the gentlemen. Brains – as the gods please; but always a procession of dishes, marched on and marshalled off, for the requisite number of tedious hours, during which you eat you know not what, because you must be ready with your answer for your elbow neighbor, or your *vis-a-vis*; during which, you taste much wine and nibble much confectionery, and finish up with coffee; and under the combined influence of all this you sink supinely into a soft chair or sofa, and the "feed" is over.

Everybody there feels just as you do. Everybody would like to creep into some quiet corner, and be let alone, till the process of digestion has had a chance.

Instead – they throw a too transparent enthusiasm into the inquiry, "How's your mother?" If the gods are kind, and there has been an inroad of measles or fever, the narrator may possibly give you ten minutes' reprieve from pumping up from beneath that dinner another query about "the baby." But if he – or she, too – is laboring, like yourself, with duck and quail, and paté and oyster, and wine and fruit and bon-bons, then may a good Providence put it into the distracted brain of the hostess to set some maiden a-foul of the piano!

Oh, but that is blessed! no matter what she plays, how hard she thumps, or how loud she screeches. Blessed – to lean back, and fold your kid gloves over your belt, and never move them till you applaud the performance, of which you know, nor care, any more than who struck Billy Patterson.

This over, you see a gentlemen coming towards you. You know by his looks, he too is suffering the pangs of repletion. Good heavens! how full of deceit is his smile, as he fastens on you, thinking *you* will talk! Mistaken man! you smile too, and both together agree that "the weather has been fine of late." This done, you look helplessly, with the untold pain of dumb animals, in each other's faces, and then glance furtively about to see if that piano-young-woman really means to leave your anguish unassuaged. She does. Hum! – you make an errand across the room to pick up a suppositious glove you dropped – and get rid of the parasite.

At last! – relief – there is your husband. *How* glad he is to see

you! It's really worth going to the dinner-party to witness that man's affection for you at that moment. Now he can yawn behind his glove. Now he takes a seat *so* near, that no man or woman can interrupt his lazy heaven. He even smiles at you from very gladness of heart, and in thick utterance tells you, in order to keep you from going from his side, that "he don't see but you look as well as any woman in the room." You only needed that unwonted display of gallantry from the hypocritical wretch, to rise immediately and leave him to his fate, though you should, in doing it, rush madly on your own.

And this is "a dinner-party." For this men and women empty their purses, and fill their decanters and wardrobes, and merge their brains in their stomachs, and – are in the fashion!

Better is a leg of mutton and caper-sauce, and much lively talk, whensoever and wheresoever a friend, with or without an invitation, cares enough about you and yours with impromptu friendship to "drop in." Best clothes, best dishes, best wine, best parlors! – what are they, with rare exceptions, but extinguishers of wit and wisdom and digestion and geniality. Who will inaugurate us a little common-sense?

Queen Victoria – how glad I am she had such a good, loving husband, to compensate her for the misery of being a queen – tried her best to abolish the custom, prevalent in England at dinner, of the gentlemen remaining to guzzle wine after the ladies left. I am aware that guzzle is an unladylike word; but, as no other fits in there, I shall use it. Well – she succeeded only in shortening

the guzzling period – not in abolishing it; so those consistent men remained, to drink toasts to "lovely women," whose backs they were so delighted to see retreating through the door.

What of it? Why, simply this, that Queen Victoria did what she could to civilize her own regal circle; and that she set a good precedent for American women of to-day to follow. I fail to see why, when a hostess has carefully watched the dishes and glasses come and go, at her husband's dinner-party, to the obstruction of all rational conversation, save by agonized spasms, – I fail to see why, when the gentlemen guests have eaten to satiety, and conversation might be supposed to be at last possible, why, at that precise, enjoyable period, the lady of the house should be obliged to accompany the empty plates to regions unknown and uncared for. This seems to me a question well worthy of consideration in this year of our Lord, 1868. It strikes me, rather an inglorious abdication for a woman of intelligence, who may be supposed to understand and take an interest in other things than the advance and retreat of salad, and ragouts, oysters, and chicken. I call it a relic of barbarism, of which men of intelligence should be ashamed. Then what advantage has the woman who cultivates her mental powers, over the veriest fool? It is an insult to her. But you say, all women are not thoughtful or intelligent. Very true: and why should they be – save that they owe it to their own self-respect – when gentlemen thus offer premiums for insipidity? – why should they inform themselves upon any subjects but those of dressing well and feeding well?

It is a satisfaction to know that there are gentlemen, who endorse the other side of the question. There was lately a dinner given in New York to a literary gentleman of distinction. One of the gentlemen invited to attend it, said to his wife: "It is a shame that ladies should not attend this dinner. *You* ought to be there, and many other ladies who are authors." Acting upon this impulse, he suggested to the committee that ladies should be invited. The answer was: First – "It would be so awkward for the ladies. Secondly – there were very few literary ladies compared to the number of literary gentlemen." Now as to the question of "awkwardness," the boot, I think, was on the other foot; and if the ladies were awkward, – which was not a complimentary supposition, – why should the gentlemen be to blame for it? And if there were "few lady authoresses," why not ask the wives of the *editors* who were to be present?

No – this was not the reason.

What was it? *Tobacco*– yes, sir, tobacco! I don't add wine – but I might. In short, these men would be obliged to conduct themselves as gentlemen were ladies present; and they wanted a margin left for the reverse. They preferred a bar-room atmosphere to the refining presence of "lovely woman," about whom they wished to hiccup at a safe distance.

Perhaps, in justice, I should add, that it was suggested that they might perhaps see the animals feed from the "musicians' balcony," or listen to the speeches "through the crack of a door," with the servants, or in some such surreptitious and

becoming and complimentary manner, which a woman of spirit and intelligence would, of course, be very likely to do.

To conclude, I trust those gentlemen who are in the habit of bemoaning "the frivolity of our women, and their sad addictedness to long milliner's bills," will reckon up the cost of cigars and wine at these dinners, from which ladies are excluded; and while they are on the anxious seat, on the economy question, ask themselves whether, putting other reasons out of the question, the presence of ladies, on these occasions, would not contribute greatly to *reduce their dinner expenses*?

I lately read an article in a London paper, in which "the woman-question" was treated in the following enlightened manner: The writer avowed his dislike to the cultivation of woman's intellect; since men had enough intellect, in their intercourse with each other; and wanted only with woman that charming, childish prattle and playfulness, which was so refreshing to the male creature, when he needed relief and amusement!

The author of these advanced ideas didn't state whether he considered these *childish, prattling* women fit to be mothers and heads of families; probably that was too puerile a question to consider in the same breath with the amusement they might afford men by the total absence of intelligence.

It is a wonder that Christians of different denominations do not see, that while they are spending the precious hours contending for the non-essentials, which are but as the fringe to

the "wedding-garment," that souls are slipping past them into eternity, uncared-for and unprepared. One is often painfully struck with this thought, in reading, or hearing, the acrid disputes of mistaken, but well-meaning, zealots.

THE BRIDE'S NEW HOUSE

SPICK and span, thorough and fresh, from attic to cellar. Pretty carpets and pictures, and glass, and silver, and china, and upholstery, and a pretty bride for the mistress! Receptions over, she looks about her. Hark! what's that? A mutiny down stairs! She didn't foresee so speedy a grapple with Intelligence offices, even if any at all. She remembers, 'tis true, that the coachman came one day to announce to mamma that "the cook was stiff drunk," and the dinner consequently in a state of indefinite postponement; and she remembers that a new cook soon took her place; and she has a misty recollection of a chamber-maid who left suddenly because she was requested not to use the cologne, and then fill up the bottle with water; and she knows another chamber-maid arrived before night, who had so tender a conscience that she couldn't say the ladies were "out," when they were in the bath, or in bed, and yet would appropriate handkerchiefs and ribbons and gloves without even winking. Still, she never thought of being bothered in this way, when *she* was married. It was all to be a rosy dream of love and quiet and comfort, and immunity from vulgar frets. "Well, she goes down into her kitchen, and inquires into the mutiny, and finds that the chamber-maid has called the cook a 'nasty thing;' and both are standing in the middle of the kitchen-floor like two cats on top of a fence, neither of which will give way for the

other, snarling, spitting, and growling, and making the fur fly at intervals. She tries to pacify them, but they out-scream each other, till her head cracks, defending themselves. She goes up to George, with both hands over her ears, and asks him 'if it isn't dreadful?'" He says, with an executive wave of his conjugal hand, "Send them both off, and go to an Intelligence-office, my dear, and get others." *He* thinks "going to an Intelligence-office," and breathing the concentration of "marasmus" in a little den ten feet square, for an hour, is to be the end of it. He don't take into account the "character" that is to be hunted up at the last place Sally lived in, up in Twenty-thousandth street, the mistress of which will keep his little wife waiting an hour to dress, before she comes down; while Sally is meantime airing her heels in the Intelligence-office, whither the new bride is to return and report, affirmatively or the reverse. If affirmatively, George supposes again that there's an end of it. Not a bit. Now, Biddy is to be instructed an hour or two every day, where to find spoons, forks, knives, towels, napkins, brooms, dusters, and where and how to use them, and at the end of a week's education, she will never once set a table without harrowing mistakes, even if, at the end of that time, her opinion of some other servant in the house does not necessitate her "finding another place;" or because, though ignorant of all she professed thoroughly to understand when she came, she objects to being "followed 'round".

'Tis true the little bride might dodge the Intelligence(?) offices and "advertise," thus holding a servant's levee for several days

in her parlors and hunting "characters" at immense distances afterwards; or, she might take a list of advertisements, and scour the city in disagreeable localities, up pairs of stairs innumerable, to find the advertisers "just engaged," if she prefer that. Either way, *the grapple* is to be met, in the person of cook, chambermaid, or waitress, or all three, every few weeks; and all this, though the little bride may ask no questions of the speedy disappearance of the household stores, or how many people unknown to her are fed at all hours out of them. Although she may prefer not to see that her damask table-napkins are used for dish-towels, or that the mattresses are never turned over when the beds are made, or that the broom never invades the corners of any apartment, but merely takes a *swish* through the centre. She may also be silent when she is told that a closet has been cleaned and put in order, although to her certain knowledge it has never been touched; for is not the virtuous and indignant rejoinder always ready, "D'ye think I'd *lie*, mum?"

Now, what comfort is her pretty silver, half cleaned, and bruised and scratched in the process? What consolation her pretty dishes, with the handles knocked off? What pleasure her china nicked at the edges? Which way soever she turns, waste, ignorance, and obstinacy stare her in the face. And is her life to be all this? Yes, except an interval now and then, when she lies with a little one on her arm, with a doctor and a nurse between her and the "grapple;" and the vision, as she gets better, of hunting up a nurse-maid, who, horror of horrors! will be "always under

her nose."

I do not say there are not exceptions to this gloomy picture, but they are rare. Sometimes a godsend of an aunt, or housekeeper, stands between the mistress of the house and all this "how not to do it." But till Intelligence-offices have something besides the raw material to offer on the one hand, or on the other, servants who insist upon performing your work "as Mrs. Jones did," and who resent as an insult the mildest intimation that you prefer your own way, and object totally to your going over your house in every part once a day, to see if things are right – while this state of things continues, the mistress, be she young or old, must needs take refuge from this grapple in hotel life, or spend her existence watching the arrival of emigrant ships.

No man has any call to speak or write on this subject, since they know nothing about it. One of them recently explained the present wastefulness of servants to be caused "by the extravagant way of living indulged in by their mistresses." Waiving the truth or falsehood of the charge, I rise to inquire, whether the dishonesty and fast-living of clerks, be not attributable to the fashionable vices and lavish expenditures of their business employers. Having aired this little question, I proceed to say, that the dissatisfaction with regard to servants is undoubtedly every day greatly on the increase. In most instances, their utter disqualifications for the high wages they demand, are patent to every observing housekeeper. If the lady of the house wishes her work properly and systematically done, she must, in addition to

paying such wages, do half the work herself; or, which amounts to the same thing, oversee these incompetent servants; who, at the end of even two months' teaching, either cannot, or will not, learn to do it faithfully. They who slight their work the most, are of course most unwilling to have the supervision. Indeed these very servants will often say, "that having done chamber-work, or cooking, for such a number of years in New York, they don't need *any* lady to instruct them how!" So that the mistress has to choose between a constant and irritating war of words, or a mismanaged household. To preserve one's patience or serenity, under such household friction, or to get time for anything else, is a very difficult task indeed. Now every *right-minded* mistress of a household desires, not only to have it well ordered, but to feel an interest in the welfare of those women who serve her: she would be glad, if they have a sorrow, to lighten it; if they are sick, to nurse them kindly; and in every way to help them to feel, that she does not look upon them as "beasts of burden," but as human beings.

I affirm that the present generation of servants neither care for nor understand this. All they want is, to be "let severely alone." Not to be "followed up," as they phrase it. If you hear the area-bell ringing punctually every day when your meals are served, they expect the fact, quite ignored by you, that some big nephew, or cousin, or lover, or uncle, with a robust appetite, comes at those times for his bowl of tea, or coffee, or a bit of meat, with some warm vegetables. They will, if found out,

lie about it, with an unblushing effrontery which is perfectly astounding; or, if well up to New York area ways, will, with arms akimbo, inquire, "Well, what's a cup of tay, or a sup of coffee, or a bit of mate, now and then, to rich folks?" and that although this may and does happen every day, and two or three times a day. As to cultivating any good understanding, or feeling, with such unscrupulous servants, it is simply impossible. There is no foundation in them for any such superstructure. Not long since, one such servant was requested at a time of sickness in the family, "to step about the house softly in the morning, as the patient had a sleepless night." She stared defiantly at the person making this gentle request, and inquired in a loud voice, "*if this wasn't a free country?*" Not long after this she smashed a very pretty butter-dish; and when told that it just cost five dollars, she loftily inquired, "*Well, what's five dollars?*"

Now what progress can even an intelligent, well-meaning, kind-intentioned mistress make with such a savage element as this?

One replies, "Oh, don't keep them, of course; get others." Very well – you wear out a pair of boots "*getting* others." To your horror, you discover that the new cook is subject "to attacks" which confine her to her bed, with – a gin bottle! till she feels like convalescing. The last lady she lived with, in the "recommendation" with which she got her own neck out of the noose, put yours into it by omitting to mention this little fact; so that again you must start on your travels "*Intelligence*" – ward.

During these changes of programme, a house gets pretty well demoralized; every servant who comes, expects to find nothing to do in the way of putting it to rights; and often when her lazy dream in this respect is realized, she will be very far, when *she* leaves, from putting her successor's mind, or bones either, at rest on this point.

All this is sufficiently rasping and vexatious. One lady remarked to me, "Oh! as for me, I neither know nor see, anything that they do. I have to choose between this or a lunatic asylum. I can't fight all the time; and if you change, there's only a new *kind* of misery."

"Your husband must have a long purse, my dear," I remarked. She shrugged her shoulders, and asked me "where I bought my new bonnet?"

Now, this state of things is deplorable enough. I can very well understand, and sympathize with, the disgust many right-minded women arrive at, after a panorama of such Sallys and Betseys have passed through their pretty houses, intent only on high wages, waste, and plunder. To fight it, only sours one's temper, and wastes one's life. There's no right feeling about them; they have neither conscience nor industry. "I have done my best," said a lady to me, "to teach and civilize and humanize them, but I tell you there's nothing to work upon; so, after giving my orders in the morning, I will neither hear nor see anything more about it."

Well, another lady will keep on her feet all day, trying to bring things to a focus; trying the impossible task of putting brains

where there is nothing but a great void; trying to encourage – trying to lighten burdens by shouldering half herself, or getting substitutes to help; and thus by superhuman efforts she gets her husband's little culinary comforts all attended to at the right time, and every disagreeable thing put under lock and key before his return; but she sits down opposite him at the table with no appetite, with not an idea in her aching head; the well-ordered repast only representing back-aches and vexation of spirit.

Now this is rather a steep price to pay for housekeeping, and that is why the cunning little lady above referred to dodged it, and saved incipient wrinkles.

In conclusion, I beg leave to suggest to ladies that they must stop "recommending" dishonest or incapable servants, merely because "they don't want a quarrel with them." In the next place, if it be true that the keepers of intelligence-offices, for a stipulated sum, will furnish "a character" for any kind of girl able to furnish the money, is it not time something were done about this?

Finally, in the name of all the New York ladies, *I* know, or have heard speak, in private, on the subject, let China, or Africa, or Professor Blot with his travelling cook-shop, and all the laundry establishments, come speedily to the rescue, and find us a way of escape. If you ask, by way of postscript, if there are *no* exceptions to the kind of servants I have described above, I answer by asking you, how often you find a four-leaved clover, or a black holly-hock, or a green rose?

Let the poor wretch, smarting under the lash of the critic, remember that indigestion has lent point and bitterness to many a sentence which would else have been kindly. He can add to this, that critics are subject, like others, to envy, ambition, and little uncharitablenesses, which grow out of them. Also, that "mutual admiration" societies are *not* extinct. Also, that some critics look through political, some through religious, and some through atheistical spectacles; and if this don't assuage his anguish, let him remember that a thousand years hence both the critic and himself will have passed into happy oblivion.

THE HAPPY LOT OF A SEXTON

NOT a bad thing to be the sexton of a church. In the first place, he gets a conspicuous start in life, by advertising on the outer wall of the church, his perfect willingness to bury all the parish in which he carries on his cheerful business, – a business which can never be dull with him, because somebody is always dying, and somebody else is always being born for the same end. Then Sunday comes regularly once a week, so that his "shop" never closes, and consequently always wants his broom of reform. Then the sexton has his little alleviations, when he has had enough of the sermon: he can make an errand out in the vestibule, after imaginary bad children, who might disturb the minister, or to see that the outer door don't creak or bang unsabbatically. When he gets tired of that, he can sit comfortably down on his stool near the door, which he can tilt back on its hind legs, out of view of all critical worshippers (except *me*), and then, and there, he can draw out that omnipresent and national jack-knife, which is his ever-present solace in every time of need. First – he can clean his nails, and pare them, varying the performance by biting off their refractory edges. Then he can commence scratching off any little spots on his trousers or coat with the point of the same. When this little exercise is concluded, and the sermon is *not*, he can draw from another pocket a case-comb, and put those fine touches to his hair which the

early church-bell had interfered with. It is tiresome on him then for a few minutes, unless some impertinent sunbeam gilds the minister's sacerdotal nose, and gives him an excuse for going up in the gallery to lower a curtain, in that dexterous manner which only a professional can compass. By this time "seventeenthly" having been concluded by the minister, the sexton hurries to the church-door, doubling up with a dexterous twist any aisle-chairs which have done duty *pro tem.* and tucking them in their appropriate corner, and then takes his position in the porch, the most important personage present save the minister himself. To the questions, "Is it the clergymen of this church who has just preached?" addressed him by some stranger, and "Is there to be an afternoon or an evening service?" and "Can you tell me where is the clergyman's residence?" and "Will you hand this note to the clergyman?" etc., etc., he returns a prompt and proud answer. And, even when Miss Belinda Jones steps to his elbow, and requests that he will pay a little more attention to ventilating the church between the services, and in fact during the week, in order that she may escape the infliction of her usual Sunday headache; and when she expatiates touchingly on the blessing and healthfulness and cheapness of fresh air, and his Christian duty to apportion a sufficient quantity to each individual to sustain life, and that meek and quiet spirit that is enjoined; even then, he bows respectfully, nor mentions that, were ventilation thus insured by open windows, and the life of the audience prolonged, it might make him a little more trouble in dusting the cushions, which he

could by no means permit. The polite sexton does not mention this, nor that he "hates fidgetty females" but he bows politely and affirmatively, locks up the bad air in the church all the same, and goes home to his roast-beef and his babies.

Upon his box the hackman sits and reads the newspaper, while his blanketed horses wait for the coming customer. In the cars the mechanic holds it, hastily running over its columns at this his only time for reading. Even in the ferry-boat the clerk and school-girl bend their heads, absorbed and well pleased. At places of amusement, before the curtain rises, the audience beguile the time by conning its pages; and even early comers to church improve the minutes by perusing the Sunday-school papers before the services begin. With these facts before us, who shall estimate the influence, for good or evil, of the newspaper? Who shall question the dignity of an editor's position, or measure his responsibilities?

LITERARY ASPIRANTS

IT is the most astonishing thing that persons who have not sufficient education to spell correctly, to punctuate properly, to place capital letters in the right places, should, when other means of support fail, send MSS. for publication. Now before me lies just such a MS., accompanying which is a letter requesting me to read it, give the writer my opinion of it, and hand the same to some publisher.

Now, here is my opinion. In the first place, every editor is crowded with offered MSS. from all sources. Secondly, many of the writers would not mind not receiving pay for the same, could they only see that MS. in print in a certain journal that they have selected. In fact, many times they would rather *pay for having it inserted* than to have it declined. This much for the glut in the market.

Then, after this, an editor makes his own selections. It may be he has already a sufficient corps of contributors, and does not care for, and will not entertain, any fresh applications. But suppose this is not the case. Suppose he looks over, or employs a person to look over, these various MSS. What chance, I ask you, among the myriads, has a MS., every other word of which is misspelt, and which is wrongly punctuated, and without paragraphs or capitals, and illegibly written beside, and, *crowning bother of all*, written on *both* sides of the page, over those which

are just the reverse; which are no trouble to read, which require no revision, and which contain *ideas* as well as words?

Very well: after all that, an editor has to decide, among even these *properly prepared* MSS., which is best suited to *his* individual paper, about which he has, and very properly, his own notions and ideas. Now an article may be well written, and yet not be the thing he wishes for his paper, although it might be the very thing desired for another. Well – he of course rejects it, as he has an undoubted right to do. He could not carry on his paper or magazine successfully on any other principle. You would not ask a grocer to buy a piece of calico because you wanted money for that calico. He would immediately say, "It is not in my line of business; I can make no use of it. I am sorry you are in want of money; but business is business. I will make you a *present* of three or four dollars, as the case may be; but your calico is of no use to me."

Now you could see the force of *that*: why can't you be made to understand that it is just so, only a *great deal more so*, with an editor?

Perhaps you say to me, "Ah, you forget the time when *you* began." I beg your pardon, but I do not. Many a weary tramp I had; much pride I put in my pocket, and few pennies, even with the advantage of a good education, and a properly prepared MS., and the initiation "of reading proof" – for my father, who was an editor, when I was not more than twelve years old – before I succeeded.

It is *because* I know; it is because I have been behind the scenes, that I tell you plainly the preliminary steps to be taken before you "send MSS. for publication," to any one.

Then, don't you see, it is not agreeable to write thus to a person who quite puts these preliminary steps out of sight, either through ignorance or conceit: My Dear Sir, or my Dear Madam, this wont do! you have neither education nor ideas. This appears to them unfeeling; but it is not. It is doing such persons a much greater kindness than you could do them by luring them on with the idea of reward, thus wasting their time, which might be used *successfully* in other directions, only to end in mortification and disappointment.

History and Biography show – perhaps you say to me – that many great men and great writers are deficient in spelling and chirography. Yes, that is true; but have you not admitted that they were "*great* writers"? An editor may be content to keep on sifting, if he is sure of finding *wheat*; but when the result is *only* chaff, life is too short for it; and his necessity to live, equally with your own, too pressing.

One specimen is as good as a thousand. My last was from a young person, who tells me that she is tired of sewing for a living, and wants to write; also, that she wants to write for a certain editor. Also, that this editor would do much better, were he to take the large sums he pays to his favorite contributors, who do *not* need it, and "assist struggling genius." Also, that "she wishes me to remember that *I* once struggled myself." Also, that she

wishes me to inform her how I went to work to get a publisher.

Now, to begin with, this young woman misspelt every other word in her letter, besides entirely ignoring capitals and punctuation. This of course settled in the outset the question of her present literary possibilities. Editors do not expect to find these things for their correspondents; at least I know one who don't; and when he "pays large sums of money to his favorite contributors" for supplying this very lack, with ideas included, I presume he knows what he is about, and I think he has the same right to prefer good spelling in his paper that the writer of this letter has to prefer literary work to sewing.

Now as to "how I got a publisher." *I didn't get him. He got me.* And when this young woman produces anything a publisher wants, or thinks he wants, she will probably have a call from one too.

Next, I don't forget "that I once struggled myself." It adds zest to my life every hour to remember it. I love the little cosey house I live in, as I never else could do, because I earned the money to buy it myself; and I thank God that, if I lost it to-day, and coupons and banks also gave out, that I am hale and strong enough, and have the will and the courage, even at this late day, to begin anew. So much for that. But I do *not* believe it to be kindness to advise this uneducated young woman to throw up her present means of support, how disagreeable soever it may be, for one, that in her present illiterate state is utterly hopeless.

Scores of such letters I get, so that I have sometimes thought

I would have a printed circular, embodying the above obvious difficulties in the way of "literary aspirants," and mail it on receipt of their epistles. To-day I concluded that I would, once for all, air my views on the subject. After this, every letter from a "literary aspirant" *which is misspelled* goes into my waste-paper basket.

Having said all this, I may, in justice to myself, own up to the fact, that time and again I have given up my own most imperative writing to correct, and *try* to make presentable, MSS. for which I was requested to "*find a publisher*," and which I knew had not the ghost of a chance, and all because *I did not*, as this young woman advises me, "forget that I once struggled myself." I never received one word of thanks for it, but instead dissatisfaction that "*somehow*" I had not insured success. I remember, in one instance, having spent nearly a month over a book in MS., laying aside a book of my own, then in process of preparation; often sitting up late at night, because I could not else get time enough to devote to it; the writer of this MS. repaying me only with abuse and defamation, as I afterwards learned.

So my conscience is quite clear on the subject of remembering, and in the best way too, my own early struggles. I have tried, in this article to express myself so as not to be misunderstood. Still I have no doubt that some "literary aspirant," feeling himself or herself aggrieved, will haste to set me down an unfeeling wretch. I can stand it.

The man with good, firm health is rich.

So is the man with a clear conscience.

So is the parent of vigorous, happy children.

So is the editor of a *good* paper, with a big subscription list.

So is the clergyman whose coat the little children of his parish pluck, as he passes them on their play.

So is that wife who has the whole heart of a good husband.

So is the maiden whose horizon is not bounded by the "coming man," but who has a purpose in life, whether she ever meet him or not.

So is the young man who, laying his hand on his heart, can say, "I have treated every woman I ever saw as I should wish my sister treated by other men."

So is the little child who goes to sleep with a kiss on its lips, and for whose waking a blessing waits.

WHAT SHALL WE DO FOR THE LITTLE CHILDREN ON SUNDAY?

"**TAKE** them to church, of course," says one. Now, I don't think it is "of course," when I look about, and see little things of four and six years old, and sometimes younger, fidgetting and squirming in their out-door wrappings, in a hot, crowded, badly ventilated church, to whom the services are a dead language, and who prevent those around them from worship, through pity for their evident uncomfortableness. I don't think it is "of course" when I see this. To be sure, there are mothers whose pockets contain alleviations for this juvenile restlessness, in the shape of sugar-plums, or picture-books; but all the time they are being applied, the mother's eye must be on the child instead of the clergymen, lest sticky fingers intrude upon silk or velvet, or a too hasty rattling of leaves in reading the book drown the sound of the preacher's voice. "They should be taught to behave," gravely asserts some person, who, perhaps, has forgotten his own childhood, or has never been a parent. That is true: we only differ as to the question whether church is the place to pursue that education. "Well, suppose you keep a child of that age at home?" asks another. "Of course he ought not to play with his toys as on other days, and he can't read all day, and no one can read or talk all day to him, and what are you going to do

then?" In the first place, I, for one, should never "take away its toys" before I could enable it to pass Sunday pleasantly without them; and, of course, I should not allow them directly to interfere with other persons' enjoyment of quiet on Sunday. It is a very difficult problem to solve, I know; but I am sure, to make Sunday a tedium and disgust, is not the way; we have all known too many sad instances of the terrible rebound of adult years from this un-wisdom. We have all known instances where "going to meeting" was *not* prematurely forced upon the restless little limbs of children, who have, when a little older, asked to accompany the family to worship, and been pleased to go. Nor would I deprive a child of its accustomed walk in the fresh air on that day; on the contrary, I should be most anxious that it should as usual enjoy the out-door brightness. I would also always have for that day some little pleasure which belonged especially to it. It may be some plain little cakes or nuts of which it was fond. I would always have on hand some stories to read, or to tell it, on that day. If possible, I would have flowers on Sunday placed at the child's plate; I would strive that Sunday should be the *cheerfullest* day of all the week to it – not a bugbear. I believe all this might be done, without disturbing any Christian's church-membership, or perilling any child's salvation. In the country it is much easier to make Sunday pleasant for children than in the city. You have only to let them stray into the garden or field, and be happy in the best way a little unformed mind can be. Or, if the weather interferes with this, the barn and the animals are a never-failing

source of pleasure to it.

There are those who might think it "wicked" to do this. The wickedness, to me, consists in making Sunday, which should be a delight, such a tedium, that, in after years, whenever the word strikes upon the ear, or the day returns, the first impulse is to shun and evade it. Oh, let Sunday be what the memory of "mother's room" is to us all – radiant with perfume of flowers and sunshine. The bright spot to look back upon, when old age sits in the chimney-corner, with the sweet psalm from voices hushed by death, or far removed, still sounding in the ears; with the memory of happy faces over the Sunday meal; the glad "Good-morning" and the soft "Good-night."

Surely the God who opens the flowers on Sunday, and lets the birds sing, did not mean that we should close our eyes to the one or our ears to the other, or that we should throw a pall over the little children.

MY HOUSE IN THE COUNTRY

WHEN I live in the country, the front door of my house shall be made for use, and not for show; and the blinds and windows shall be thrown wide open from sunrise until sunset; and I will issue invitations to the bees and birds and butterflies to come in and out at their own convenience, without fear of molestation from me, or of danger to my furniture or belongings. If a few mosquitoes follow suit, I will accept them as a necessary evil, and not to be compared, in the way of annoyance, with that air of sepulchral gloom which, like a wet blanket of mist, surrounds the exterior of most country dwellings, where the men, women, and children skulk round like burglars to the *back* of the house to effect an entrance, and the closed door and blinds are suggestive of a corpse awaiting burial. And yet I think I understand how this bad custom came about. It was from many babies and much darning and baking, and the dread of impending fly-specks on the gilt frame encircling General Washington and the large looking-glass. But, dear friends, put a mahogany frame round the General, and banish the looking-glass, which will, in a few years, if you neglect all that makes home cheerful, reflect only the imprint of life's cares, instead of its pleasures and contents. "*They* are so very few," you say. Well, then the more necessity for letting in the sunshine. As I walk about, I notice the careworn, pallid faces of the wives and mothers about

many of these country homes, and the careless untidiness of dress which, in a woman, means that she has given the whole thing up, either from overwork or lack of sympathy from the one person for whom the shining hair was once neatly combed, and the strip of white collar carefully pinned, although it might be late in the day before time was found to do these things. When I see these women at nightfall, in this neglectful dress, sitting alone upon the back door-step, while the husband and father has strolled off to some neighbor's, and lies flat on his stomach on the grass, with half a dozen other husbands and fathers, browsing like so many cattle, without a thought of those weary women, I fall to thinking how much life would be worth to me reduced to this utilitarian standard of cow and cabbage. Then I wonder if those women were to throw open the blinds and doors and windows of the front of the house, and smooth their hair a bit, and let one of the children pick some grasses and wild flowers for the mantel, and then tell their respective Johns and Toms to bring into the house the men they like to talk to at that hour, so that all could be jolly together, whether it wouldn't change things for the better. If that plan didn't work, do you know what I would do? I would shoulder my baby, and trot down the road to the nearest neighbor's, and let the old coffin of a house take care of itself. I *wouldn't* rust, anyhow.

Now, it may be that these women wouldn't know how miserable they were, if I didn't tell them of it. So much the worse, then. I only know that if life were *all work* to me, it should go

hard but I would try to catch a sunbeam now and then, if it were only that the children might not be demoralized by growing up to look at me in the light of a dray-horse; if it were only that my boys need not expect *their* wives to close their eyes and ears to the beauty and harmony which God had scattered so lavishly about them. Because there are rocks, shall there be no roses? Because there is dust, shall there be no dew?

Do you do well, my sisters, to make your houses so gloomy that your husbands would rather roost outside upon the stone fences, than stay in them? Don't *have* a "best carpet;" don't *have* a "best sofa." Let in the sun, and the birds, and the children, though it involve bare floors and wooden chairs, and the total banishment of General Washington and that best looking-glass. *Eat* in your "best parlor," and laugh in it; don't save it up to be laid out in! Try it now, and see if life isn't a different thing to you all. As to your "work," a great deal of it is unnecessary. John and the children would be much better without pies, cakes, and doughnuts. Make it your religion to give them wholesome bread and meat, and then stop and take a little breath. Nobody will thank you for turning yourself into a machine. When you drop in your tracks, they will just shovel the earth over you, and get Jerusha Ann Somebody to step into your shoes. They wont cry a bit. You never stopped to say a word to them except "*get out of my way.*" To be sure, you were working hard for them all the while, but that wont be remembered. So you just take a little comfort yourself as you go along, and look after "No 1." Laugh more and

darn less; they will like you twice as well. If there is more work than you can consistently do, *don't do it*. Sometimes there is a little blossom of a daughter in a family who makes everything bright with her finger-tips; if there is none in yours, do *you* be that blossom. Don't, even for John, let your children remember home as a charnel-house, and you as its female sexton.

WHY WEAR MOURNING?

I WISH that a few sensible, intelligent, *wealthy* people would cease draping and festooning themselves like engine-houses, when a death occurs in the family. I use word "*wealthy*" advisedly; because it is only that class who can really effect a reformation, for the reason that *they* will not be supposed unable "to pay a proper respect," as the phrase runs, to the deceased. Proper respect! Do yards of crape and bombazine never express the opposite emotion? Is real heart-breaking grief to be gauged by the width of a hem, or the length or thickness of a veil? Have not many a widow and orphan woke up, the morning after a funeral, to find the little left by the deceased, expended in funereal carriages, for people who would not lift a helping finger if it would keep them out of the almshouse? We all know that, or if we don't, we may wake up to the fact, some future day, when the sunshine of prosperity is clouded over. That point disposed of, it must also be remembered that a black dress now is hardly "mourning;" since that color is so fashionable for street and home, and even festive wear, that it is hard to distinguish the lady who affects "all black," because "it is so stylish," from a bereaved person. Another objection to "mourning" is, that it is the most expensive dress that can be worn, because most easily spoiled by rain, or dampness, or dust; and as "proper respect for the deceased" requires such voluminous folds of it, and so often

renewed to be presentable, or else many changes of mourning to keep the "best suit" up to the proper grief requirement, that the tax on a limited purse may be easily calculated.

Said a lady to me one day, "This heavy crape-vail, over my face and down to my knees, keeps out the air, and gives me a constant sick-headache." – "Why, then, wear it?" asked I. – "Because it wouldn't be *decent* to omit it," she replied. This remark, of course, requires no comment.

Then, again, the little children – death must be made as horrible as possible to *them* too, at the bidding of custom! They must be swathed in sackcloth although only two or three years of sunshine have put the golden gleam in their hair. Is it not enough that papa or mamma, or sister or brother, may never answer again when their bird-like voices call them! Is it Christian or even humane, so to surround them with gloom that "death" shall be a never-ceasing nightmare? I never see a little creature so habited, that I do not long to hang a garland of roses about its neck, and point to the blue heavens as an emblem of that serene rest which has come to the sleeper.

But you may ask, "Would you give *no* sign, *no* token that the footprints of the Destroyer are over your threshold?" Yes, the same that is used by military men when their chief has departed – a crape upon the arm. This simple token – no more; since, as I say, multiplied bombazine and crape do *not* always express either grief or respect; since they often represent the contrary, and mostly an expense which can ill be borne by the survivors

even when grief is sincere; and since this already recognized military badge of bereavement answers all the purpose – why not?

The white ribbon tied upon the door-handle, with rosebuds attached, when the baby's lids are forever closed – oh! that is beautiful. There are, and must be, breaking hearts inside that door; but I know by experience that the moment will surely come, after nature shall have had its saving flow of tears, when, in the sense of perfect peace, and safety for the little song-bird, now far above the clouds of earth, they will forget themselves and remember only that.

Then away with all these heathenish insignia; they certainly stand no more for grief or respect than a flashing diamond on the neck or finger, denotes wealth or social position, or even respectability. Above all, away with this bugaboo nightmare of little children, who will have enough, God knows, to contend with, as they grow older, without prematurely draping with the blackness of darkness, the entrance to a portal through which they are certainly destined to pass, and which the light of faith in their maturer years may gild, as the shining gate to the Celestial City.

"DELIGHTFUL MEN."

ISN'T he a delightful man? This question was addressed to me by a lady in company concerning a gentleman who had rendered himself during the evening, peculiarly agreeable. Before I answer that question, I said, I would like to see him at home. I would like to know if, when he jars his wife's feelings, he says, "Beg pardon" as willingly and promptly as when he stepped upon yonder lady's dress. I would like to know if, when he comes home at night, he has some pleasant little things to say, such as he has scattered about so lavishly since he entered this room this evening; and whether if the badly cooked dish, which he gallantly declared to the hostess at the table, "could not have been improved," would have found a similar verdict on his own table, and to his own wife. *That is the test.* I am sorry to say that some of the most agreeable society-men, who could, by no possibility, be guilty of a rudeness abroad, could never be suspected in their own homes of ever doing anything else. The man who will invariably meet other ladies with "How very well you are looking!" will often never, from one day to another, take notice of his own wife's appearance, or, if so, only to find fault. How bright that home would be to his wife with one half the courtesy and toleration he invariably shows to strangers. "Allow me to differ" – he blandly remarks to an opponent with whom he argues in company. "Pshaw! what do *you* know about it?" he

says at his own fireside and to his wife. Children are "angels" when they belong to his neighbors; his own are sent out of the room whenever he enters it, or receive so little recognition that they are glad to leave. "Permit me," says the gallant male *vis-a-vis* in the omnibus or car, as he takes your fare; while *his* wife often hands up her own fare, even with her husband by her side. No wonder she is not "looking well" when she sees politeness is for every place but for home-consumption.

"Oh, how men miss it in disregarding these little matters," said a sad-eyed wife to me one day. And she said truly; for these little kindnesses are like a breath of fresh air from an open window in a stifled room; we lift our drooping heads and breathe again! "Little!" did I say! *Can* that be little which makes or mars the happiness of a human being? A man says a rough, rude word, or neglects the golden opportunity to say a kind one, and goes his selfish way and thinks it of no account. Then he marvels when he comes back, – in sublime forgetfulness of the past, – that the familiar eye does not brighten at his coming, or the familiar tongue voice a welcome. Then, on inquiry, if he is told of the rough word, he says: "O-o-h! *that's* it – is it? Now it isn't possible that you gave *that* a second thought? Why, *I* forgot all about it!" as if this last were really a palliation and a merit.

It would be ludicrous, this masculine obtuseness, were it not for the tragic consequences – were it not for the loving hearts that are chilled – the homes that are darkened – the lives that are blighted – and the dew and promise of the morning that are so

needlessly turned into sombre night.

"Little things!" There *are* no little things. "Little things," so called, are the hinges of the universe. They are happiness, or misery; they are poverty, or riches; they are prosperity or adversity; they are life, or death. Not a human being of us all, can afford to despise "the day of *small* things."

Yes, husbands, *be cheerful at home*. I daresay, sir, *your* Bible may belong to an expurgated edition; but this sentiment is in mine. I have unfortunately loaned it to a neighbor, so that I cannot at this minute point to the exact chapter, but that's neither here nor there.

In every "Guide for Wives" I find "cheerfulness" the first article set down in the creed; with no margin left for crying babies, or sleepless nights, or incompetent "help," or any of the small miseries which men wave off with their hands as "not worth minding, my dear!" So when the time comes for John's return from the shop or office, they begin the cheerful dodge, just as they are bid, by the *single* men and women, who usually write these "Guides for Wives." They hurry to wash the children's faces, or to have them washed, and stagger round, though they may not have had a breath of fresh air for a week, to make things "cheerful" for John. John's beef and vegetables and dessert are all right. He accepts them, and eats them. Then he lies down on the sofa to digest them, which he does silently – cow-fashion. The children, one by one, are sent to bed. Now, does it occur to John that he might try *his* hand at a little "cheerfulness"? Not a bit. He

asks his wife, coolly, if there's anything in the evening paper.

She is so tired of the house and its cares, which have cobwebbed her all over till she is half smothered, soul and body, that this question seems the cruelest one that could be put, in her nervous condition. She *ought* to answer as he does, when she asks him what is in the *morning* paper, the while she is feeding Tommy — *his* Tommy as well as hers: "Read it, my dear; it is full of interest!"

Instead, she takes up the evening paper wearily; and though the tell-tale, exhausted tones of her voice as she reads, are sufficiently suggestive of her inability for reading aloud, yet he graciously listens well pleased, and goes to sleep just as she gets down to the advertisements, which is a good place!

Now that woman *ought* just then, quietly to put on her bonnet and shawl, and run into one of the neighbors', and stay till *she* has got a little "cheerfulness;" but the "Guide to Wives" insists that, instead, she sit down and look at her John, so that no unlucky noise may disturb his slumber; and half the wives do it too, and that's the way they make, and perpetuate, these very Johns.

The way men nurse up *their* frail bodies is curious to witness, in contrast with the little care they take of their wives. Now it never occurs to most wives that being "tired," is an excuse for not doing anything that, half dead, they are drummed up to do. Now there's just where I blame them. If they wait for their Johns to *see* it, or to *say* it, they may wait till the millennium. There's no need of a fight about it either. *He* wants to lie there and be read to. Well

— let him lie there; but don't you read to him, or talk to him either, when you feel that way. If he is so stupid or indifferent, as not to see that you can't begin another day of worry like that, without a reprieve of some kind, bid him a pleasant good-evening, and go to some pleasant neighbor's, as he would do, if he felt like it, for the same reason — as he *did* do the evening before, without consulting your preference or tiredness.

Now this may sound vixenish, but it is simply *justice*; and it is time women learned that, as mothers of families, it is just as much their duty to consult their physical needs, as it is for the fathers of families to consult theirs, and more too, since the nervous organization of women is more delicate, and the pettiness of their household cares more exhaustive and wearing, than a man's can possibly be; and this I will insist on, spite of Todd and Bushnell, and every clerical pussy-cat who ever mewed "Let us have peace!" Peace, reverend sirs, is of no sex. *We* like it too; but too dear a price may be paid even for "peace."

Now I know there are instances, for I have seen them, in which the husband is the only cheerful element in the house — when his step, his countenance, like the sunrise, irradiates and warms every nook and corner. But ah! how rare is this! I know too that cheerfulness is greatly a thing of temperament; but I also know, that it is just as much a man's duty to cultivate it by reading to his wife, and conversing with his wife, as it is hers to amuse and cheer him when the day's cares are over. And in this regard I must say that men, as a general thing, are disgustingly

selfish. Absorbing, but never giving out – accepting, but seldom returning. It is for women to assert their right to fresh air, to relaxation, to relief from care, whenever the physical system breaks down, just as men always do; for the Johns seldom wake up to it till a coffin is ordered – and pocket-handkerchiefs are too late!

And, speaking of that, nothing is more comical to me, in my journeyings to and fro in the earth, than the blundering way in which most men legislate their domestic affairs. Mr. Jones, for instance, is attracted to a delicate, timid, nervous little lady, and moves heaven and earth, and upsets several families who have a special objection to her becoming Mrs. Jones, in order to bring about this desirable result. After an immense besieging outlay, he gets her. We will leave a margin for the honeymoon. Then commences life in earnest. The little wife stands aghast to find that her husband's whole aim, is to transform her into the direct opposite to that which he formerly admired. In short, that to retain his love and respect, she must make herself, by some process or other only known to herself, entirely over. For instance, she is so constituted that the sight of blood has always given her a deadly faintness, and she never was able to assist, in any emergency or accident, where physical pain was involved. Now this is not an affectation with her – she *really can not* do it. Now Mr. Jones, with masculine acumen, immediately sets in motion a series of little tyrannies, to force what a lifetime could never bring about, no more than it could change his wife's hair

from jet to flaxen color. Does their child break a leg, or arm, he insists, although other aid is at hand, that she shall not only be present, but assist in the dressing and binding up of the same, by way of eradicating and overcoming what he calls a "folly." To this end he uses sarcasm, ridicule, threats, every thing which he thinks the "head of the family" is justified in using, to force this child-woman's nature, which once had such fragile attractions for him, into an up-hill course, in which it is impossible for it ever to go, with all the tyranny he can bring to bear upon it; and thus he keeps on trying, – year after year, – with an amount of persistence which should entitle him to a lunatic's cell, and which is gradually preparing his wife for one, through mortification and wounded affection.

Again – a man is attracted to a woman of marked individuality of character. He admires her decision and self-poise, her energy and self-reliance, and stamps them, with one hand on his heart, with the conjugal seal. Directly upon possession, that which seemed to him so admirable conflicts with his opinions, wounds his self-love, and even though gradually and properly expressed, seems to breathe defiance. Now *this* woman he, too, strives to *make over*. He disputes her positions and opinions with acidity, because they differ from his own, and therefore must be wrong. Perhaps he looks at her, and at them, more through the eyes of impertinent outsiders who have nothing to do with it, than through his own spectacles. Many a man will perpetrate a great injustice in his own household, rather than bear the slightest

meddling imputation that he is not its master. So, year after year, this fruitless effort goes on, to transform a full-grown tree to a little sapling, capable of being bent in any and every direction, according to the moulder's capricious whim or fancy, with not the ghost of a result, so far as success is concerned.

I might cite many other instances to illustrate the absurd manner in which men persist in marring their own happiness; committing those flagrant injustices of which women either die, and make no sign, or break into what is called "*unwomanly*" rebellion, when their sense of justice is outraged, by the *love* which has proved weaker than *pride*.

It is pitiful to think how frequent are these life-mistakes, and more pitiful still to think, that women themselves are responsible in a great measure for them. Let parents see to it, especially let *mothers* see to it, that the little boy is to yield equally with his sisters in their games and plays. Let the maxim, "Give it to your *sister*," issue as often from your lips as "Give it to your *brother*." Let the father say as often to his son, "Prepare to become the excellent husband of some good woman," as the mother to her daughter, "Prepare to be the worthy wife of some good man." In other words, begin at the fireside. Remember that you are training that little boy to make or mar the happiness of some woman, according as you teach him self-government – justice – and the contrary. This is an idea which even abused wives seldom think of. It might be well for them, and some now happy girl, who may lose through that boy, heart and hope in the future, did

they do so.

CHOOSING PRESENTS

"**WHICH** would you prefer," asked a friend of me, – "a pretty useless present, or an ugly useful one?" I had to stop and think before replying. I knew it was a trap sprung for my halting; so, woman-like, I dodged my weak side by saying, "There is no necessity, as I see, for either extreme."

One of our first biographers has remarked of me, that if he brings home an *ugly-looking* book, and lays it upon the table, I very soon transfer it to a less conspicuous locality. This may or may not be true; meantime I am not going to blink the fact that I adore pretty things. Butter tastes better to me from a dainty little dish. So do vegetables. Nor, to compass this, does one need the purse of Fortunatus. Pretty shapes in vases, pitchers, plates, and the like, have commended themselves to me, though not of silver. In fact, since the burglars relieved me of my silver while in the country last summer, I resolutely set my face against any further invitations to them in that shape. This is to certify that henceforth only plated ware, but very *pretty* plated ware, shall cross my threshold.

But, not to digress, what a "mess" people generally make of holiday presents! Some houses contain only silver soup-ladles, others a superabundance of butter-knives. Some babies, again, have silver cups enough so furnish all their descendants, be they more or less. The most harrowing present I know of is a

"picture annual," all over gilt, with wide margins inside, and with common-sense at a discount. It is a type of a pretty mouth from whence issues only folly. Worsteds cats and dogs come next, in the shape of mats, chair-covers, etc. Now a dozen of handkerchiefs or gloves, may be both pretty and sensible as a present. So is a flower-stand, without which, in my opinion, no parlor is furnished, how plentifully soever satin and gilt may abound. I am frivolous enough to like rings, brooches, ear-rings, and bracelets, of lovely, but above all, *odd* forms and designs, if worn at the proper time and place. But, dear! dear! I shouldn't make a good Quaker, for a bit of scarlet somewhere in my room, is quite necessary to my peace of mind. I look at that elaborate little bird-house for sparrows, fronting the Quaker meeting-house, and I think I see a symptom of the coming millennium for Quakers. I frankly own to exchanging a white syrup-pitcher the other day, in favor of a white one with a scarlet handle. I like these little touches of color to a degree, that, if Heaven depended on their absence, might possibly peril my chances of Paradise.

Now I am not apologizing for this – not a bit! I am only sorry for those of you who trudge along whether from choice or necessity – through life's dusty highway, without stopping to notice, or to cull, the flowers hidden in its hedge-rows, and place them as you go, in your hair, or in your bosom.

Pretty things are humanizing. I wish every work-room could have its flowers and its pictures. *My God* don't turn His back on either. Even in the dull old yard of a tenement house, He sends

up through the chinks tiny blades of grass and dandelion, and chickweed blossoms. And does not the pure white snow come sifting down over the garbage-heaps and ash-barrels before the door of poverty which man, less merciful, would doom to have all the year round before their disgusted vision?

Meantime, let us hope that "the minister's" holiday present may be a pair of boxing-gloves instead of a hymn-book, of which latter he has a surfeit. As to his wife – for goodness' sake, send her the same thing you would, were she the wife of a layman. And if you order her a cake, don't surmount it with a cross, of which ministers' wives have already too many in their parishioners. Give an editor a new subscriber and you can't miss it. Send a lawyer no bones to pick, unless – well covered with meat! And don't make a *pup* of your husband by giving him a velvet dressing-gown. And as to you, sir, don't pick out for *your* wife just what your friend Jenkins does for *his*; because, though men are all alike, and cigars are always acceptable to them, yet a man can never be certain whether his wife, on the receipt of a present from her husband, will box his ears, or fall to kissing him; and since Variety is the god of most men, I suppose this is all right.

It must be owned, that of all perplexing things on earth, the greatest is the perplexity of choosing a present. After you have considered, first your purse; then the multifarious demands upon it; then the age, desires, and taste of the recipient – comes the weary tramp in hot, crowded stores for the desired article; comes the known incivility of *most* women bent on shopping errands,

to their fellow-women; of addressing the clerk, upon whom you, as first-comer, have a prior claim, or even drawing from your and his fingers the very article you have under distracted consideration. Of course I don't mean *you*, my dear; didn't I say *most* women? You will always find that I leave a door of escape open, before I insinuate that my sex are not all seraphs. Well – you make your purchase, and perspire in your furs, while "cash" performs his gymnastics through feminine feet and hoops, to get it *parcelled* and return your change. But, alas! this is only one present, and it has taken an entire morning to get it, and when you get home Aunt Jemima whispers confidentially "that she overheard John say that *he* had bought that very article for the same person for whom yours was intended;" and, what is worse, you can't transfer it, because there is no other member of the family for whom it would be suitable. You wonder if it wouldn't do to enclose so many dollars to each member of the family, and let them make their own selection. Sentiment would have to "go under," of course; but don't it when a recipient wonders "how much you paid for your gift"? Time was, when a present was acceptable, or on the contrary, according to the love which prompted it, and not according to the value of the gift. Now, young ladies expect diamonds, and pearls, and rubies, and quite turn up their pretty noses at a book, or a work-box, or a writing-desk. What with "golden weddings" and "silver weddings," and other bids for gold and silver in various shapes, what with the bugbear word "mean" in such connection, bankruptcy, or an

inglorious exit, is the only alternative to many. I have been some time coming to my moral, which is this: that the "present" system is, to use a slang expression, "run into the ground." I except the present a husband gives his wife, for whom nothing of course is too good, or too tasteful, or too costly; and who can, while receiving it, ask him to give her a hundred dollars or so, to go out and *buy him one*! Also, in all heartiness, and without joking, I except the little children, whose lovely dream of Santa Claus vanishes with the flossy, golden-tipped curls of babyhood. Pile up for them the dolls, and tops, and whistles, and wagons, and kaleidoscopes, and velocipedes, that they may always when old age seats them in the chimney-corner have this bright spot to look back upon, over the graves of buried hopes and hearts, which could not else bear thinking of.

A BID FOR AN EDITORSHIP

I THINK I should like to be an editor, if somebody would do all the disagreeable, hard work for me, and leave me only the fancy touches. I don't know how profound my political articles would be, but they would be *mine*. I think my book reviews would be pleasant reading, at least to everybody but some of the authors. I should have a high railing round my editorial desk, and "through the lattice" microscopically and leisurely regard the row of expectant men waiting outside for a hearing. I should not need a spittoon in my office. Nobody should contribute to my paper who smoked, or chewed, or snuffed tobacco; that would diminish my contributors' list about right. I should discard Webster and Walker, and inaugurate a dictionary of my own. I should allow anybody who felt inclined to send me samples of big strawberries and peaches, and bunches of flowers; and I should get a fine library, free gratis, out of the books sent me to review. As to grinding the axes of the givers in return, why that, of course, should always be left to the option of the editor. Before I commenced an editor's life, I should secure money enough in some way to be able to snap my fingers in the face of that grim ogre, "Stop my Paper!" I tell you I *wouldn't* stop it. It is a free country. I'd keep on sending it to him. I'd always have something in every number about him, so that he couldn't do without having it, how much soever he might want to.

Then you should see my desk. It should be dusted once a year, to show editors what a desk *might* be. My editorial chair shouldn't pivot; there should be no shadow of turning about that. Gibraltar should be a circumstance to it. The windows of my editorial den should be scraped with a sharp knife occasionally, to take off sufficient dirt to enable me to write legibly. I should keep my best bonnet in a bandbox under my desk, for any sudden dress emergency, as do editors their go-to-meetin' hat. Like them, too, I should have a small looking-glass for – visitors! also a bottle of – "medicine" for – visitors! I don't think I should need a safe, as the principles upon which my paper would be conducted would render it unnecessary. My object would be to amuse *myself*, and say just what came uppermost, not by any means to please or edify my species. Now, I have examined all the papers that cross my threshold, and I am very sure that I have hit on quite an original idea.

If it stormed badly on publication day, I wouldn't send the poor devils in my employ out with my paper, just because my subscribers fancied they wanted it. Let 'em wait. The first fair day they'd have it, of course. In the meantime, the printer's devil, and the compositors, and the rest of 'em, could play chequers till the sky cleared up.

If anybody sued me for libel, I'd – I'd whine out, "Aint you ashamed to annoy a female? Why don't you strike one of your own size?" I should insist on being treated with the deference due to a woman, though in all respects I should demand the

untrammelled-seven-leagued-boots-freedom of a man. My object would be to hit everybody smack between the eyes, when I felt like it; and when I saw brutal retribution coming, to throw my silk apron over my head and whimper.

I have not yet decided upon the title of my paper. Children are not generally baptized until after they are born. Nor do I know who will stand sponsor. All that is in the misty future. As to the price, I should nail up a cash-box at the foot of the stairs, and people could drop in whatever they liked. I should, by that means, not only show my unshaken confidence in human nature, but also learn in what estimation the general public held my services. There's nothing so dear to my heart as spontaneity.

A SERMON TO PLYMOUTH PULPIT

O MR. BEECHER! that you should recommend "candy," or "sugar plums," it is all the same, for the youngsters. That *you* should be quoted through the length and breadth of the land as having done so, to the delight of these youngsters, and the candy-merchants, and the dentists, and the doctors generally! To be *candid*, I am ashamed of you.

Do you suppose that you are the only grandparent in the land? The only loving, the only proud grandparent? I am a grandparent. I can love as hard as you can. I can show just as bewildering a grandchild as you can. It is just as hard for me to say No to that grandchild as it is for you to say No to yours; but — excuse me — *I* can do it. She is five years old, but never touches candy. When she was three, a lady in an omnibus gave her a red and white peppermint stick, and she turned to me and asked "if it were not a pretty *toy*?" She knows now that candy is to eat; but when it is given her, whether in my presence or not, she says, "I am not allowed to eat candy." Meantime, she loves beefsteak, she loves potatoes, she drinks milk and eats bread, with a relish that candy-fed children never know. Either you are very right, or I am very wrong. You see I am touchy on this subject, having worn out several pens and distributed much ink in the crusade against it;

and here *you*, in the *Ledger*, right under my very nose, with one frisk of your magic pen, cover me with indelible ignominy!

"Mr. Beecher says children should have candy;" and, what is more, he thinks they should be *bought* to be good by it! Oh, fie!

Well, now, I reply: Mr. Beecher is a *man*. If his grandchild has the stomach-ache, it is the *women* of the family who will soothe it, and bear its cries and its wakeful nights. If the little teeth prematurely decay and ache, it is *the women* who will accompany it to the dentist's for the heart-rending wrench of cold iron. Mr. Beecher, in short, decided this candy question from a *man's* standpoint. He took the popular side of the question with the children, who will always shout hosanna to him for the same. But, my dear sir, the mothers who, going home after shopping through Broadway, stop each day for the poisonous parcel of sweets for Johnny and Susy, need restraint, not encouragement, from you. They "can't imagine what ails Susy or Johnny, to be so fretful" after eating it. Of course they never for a moment suppose it to be candy. Didn't *they* eat candy? And are they buried yet? *I* ask another question: What is the state of their teeth and digestion to-day? What their powers of endurance as mothers? What, in short, do they annually contribute to enable the fat family doctor to ride in his carriage and live in Fifth Avenue? *That's* what *I* want to know.

O Mr. Beecher! well as I like you, I don't know what to say to you; and what makes the case more aggravating, I know I shall keep on liking you, whatever you say. That's the worst of it, and

you know it. And I am going to send this right off to the *Ledger* office without a second reading, lest I should qualify it, or trim it up, or make it more respectful because you are "a minister."

No, sir; I won't do it; I'll take example by a rampant female at a public meeting the other night, who was scolding her husband for not getting her a better seat. The distressed man laid his hand on her arm, saying, "Hush! here's Fanny Fern; she will hear you." With distended nostrils, that admirable woman replied, "I don't care for six hundred Fanny Ferns!"

My dear sir, your hand is too well accustomed to drawing a moral, for me to presume to do it for you in this case! Adieu.

FEMALE CLERKS

I HAVE heard the objection made, by women, to female clerks in stores, that they are less civil and attentive to their own sex than are male clerks. I can only answer for myself, that I have never found any reason to complain of them in this regard. In fact, I often wonder at their patience and civility under very trying circumstances. I suppose gallantry supplies the place of patience in male clerks. With so many fresh, pretty, dimpled young faces to look at, a young man need not be so very churlish, though he be not christened Job.

Female clerks, it always seemed to me, must necessarily give out first *in their feet*. That incessant standing, from morning to night, must be more trying to them than to men. Many women, I know, can *walk* miles more easily than they could stand for half an hour.

After making a purchase at a store quite late in the afternoon, I said to the young girl who waited upon me, —

"How very tired you must get of us women, day after day!"

"There is a great difference in them," she civilly replied.

"But don't your feet ache sadly?" I asked. "That always seemed to me the most trying part of it."

She smiled as she pulled from under the seat, behind the counter, a stool.

"I thought that mitigation of weariness was against all

regulations in stores," I replied.

"Not in *this*," was her answer. "Mr. — has always allowed his female clerks to sit down when they were tired."

Now, I was so pleased at this that I should like to give that employer's name in full on this page. Here was a man who was wise enough, and, above all, humane enough, to look on *their* side of the question. In doing so, of course, he did not overlook his own. In doing so, he may also have known that there is a point when even a woman's india-rubber patience, may be stretched too far. He may have known that, when soul and body gave out, and a customer came in at that trying moment, and the "last ounce" having been "laid on the camel's back," the article inquired for *they* "*did not keep!*" I say he *might* have been keen enough to have known this. I prefer to believe, that being a good, kind-hearted man, he tried to make service for these young girls as light as he would wish it made for his own young daughters, were they in that position. It is very certain that, which way soever we look at it, it is an example which other employers would do well to follow.

It wont do the male clerks any harm to stand still; but I would be very glad to have inaugurated this humane consideration for the young women. I heard one of them tell a friend, the other day, that she had to go directly to bed each evening on her return home, because her feet and back ached so intolerably.

Another suggestion: When employers have any occasion to reprove these young women, if they would not mortify them by

doing it in the presence and in the hearing of customers, it would not only be more pleasant for the latter, but would be more likely to have its proper effect on the offender. I have sometimes heard such brutal things said by employers to a blushing young girl, whose eyes filled with tears at her helplessness to avert it, or to reply to it, that I never could enter the store again, for fear of a repetition of the distressing scene, although, so far as I personally was concerned, I had nothing to complain of.

The moral of all this is, that men in the family, and in the store too, must look upon women in a different light from that to which they are accustomed; before, to use a detestable phrase, but one which will appeal most strongly to the majority, they "can get the most work out of them." Physicians understand this. Every man is not a physician, but he ought at least to know that backaches and headaches, and heartaches too, are not confined to his own sex.

BLUE MONDAY

"**BLUE** Monday." By this name clergymen designate the day. Preaching as they do, two sermons on the Sabbath, sometimes three – not to mention Sunday-school exhortations, and possible funerals and marriages; of course, I take no account of what may have happened, on Sunday, in *their own* families, no more than does the outside world. "The minister" must, like a conductor of a railroad train, be "up to time," – hence "Blue Monday." Flesh and blood is flesh and blood, although covered by a surplice or a cassock, and will get *tired*, even in a good cause. Therefore the worn-out clergyman takes Monday for a day of rest, for truly the Sabbath is none. He wanders about and tries to give his brains a holiday – I say *tries*, because he often misses it by wandering into the book-stores, or going to see a publisher, instead of taking a drive, or a ramble in the fields, or wooing nature, who never fails to lay a healing hand on her children.

But Blue Monday does not belong exclusively to clergymen – oh, mother of many children! as you can testify. True, you call it by another name – "Washing-day," – but it is all one, as far as exhaustion is its characteristic. May the gods grant that on that day, when your assistant in nursery-labor must often make up the deficiencies involved in the terrible "family-wash," that no "plumber" or "gas-fitter" send in his bill, to "rile" the good man of the house, to exclaim against the "expenses of housekeeping,"

and send you into your Babel of a nursery, with moist eyes and a heavy heart? It is poor comfort, after you have cried it out, to try to pacify yourself by saying, Well, he didn't *mean* to say I'm sorry I ever was married, yet it hurts me all the same; men are so thoughtless about such things, and they go out after hurling such a poisoned arrow, and forget, even if they ever knew it, that they have left it there to rankle all day; and are quite astonished, and, perhaps, disgusted when they come back that the good lady is not in excellent spirits, as they are, and wonder what *she*, with a comfortable home, and nothing but house matters to attend to, can find to worry her. Now, Mrs. Jones, and Mrs. Jenkins, and Mrs. Smith, I'll lay a wager with each of you, that your husbands have done that very thing, more times than you can count, and on "Blue Monday" too.

Ah! these "chance words," and the *thick-skinned* utterers of them. Ah! the pity that the needle is no hindrance to the bitter thoughts they bring; but that over the little torn apron or frock, the tears of discouragement fall; the bitterest of all – that *he* hasn't the least idea "he has said anything," but is, very likely, inviting some fellow that very minute to "take a drink" with him, or to smoke a dozen cigars more or less, spite the "expense." My dears, wipe your eyes. If you look for consistency in the male creature, you'll need a microscope to find it. *Your* expenses hurt him dreadfully; when I say yours, I mean not only your *personal* expenses, but the *house* expenses; for don't you see, had he staid a bachelor, he wouldn't have had a plumber's bill to pay – and

that's all your fault, because you said "yes," when he got on his knees to implore you that he *might* have the felicity of paying your mutual plumber's bill.

But *that was then*, and *this is now*!

But isn't it perfectly delicious when those men come home, after making some such blundering speech, the innocent way, after hanging up their hats, that they'll walk into your presence, rubbing their hands, and fetch up standing in the middle of the room with, "Why! *what's* the matter?" as they catch sight of their wives' lugubrious faces. I tell you, Mr. Smith, and Mr. Jones, and Mr. Jenkins, whatsoever else you do, *don't* hold your *wives* responsible for that which they are no more to blame for than yourselves. Or if you will insist upon going over their hearts with a cart-wheel, in this manner, have the manliness when you come home, not to pooh-pooh the resentful tears you have caused.

The fact is, you are but blunderers as far as women are concerned. You are elephants trying with your huge paws to pat humming-birds. Nine out of every ten you demolish. Only physicians understand a woman; and they don't always act up to the light they have.

I would like to write a book on some kinds of legal murder; that is if really *good* people had not such moonshine notions about "delicacy." This class are really the drags on the wheel of reform. I don't say that sometimes it is not necessary, and even right, to drive rough-shod right over them, if they will persist in walking in such a narrow path; but one does it after all with

regret, because they so sincerely believe themselves to be in the "path of duty," as they call it. Dear me! if there ever was a perverted phrase, this is one! It makes me sick to hear it.

What do I mean by "legal murders"? Well, if a woman is knocked on the head with a flat-iron by her husband and killed, or if arsenic is mixed with her food, or if a bullet is sent through her brain, the law takes cognizance of it. But what of the cruel words that just as surely kill, by constant repetition? What of the neglect? What of the diseased children of a pure, healthy mother? What of the ten or twelve, even healthy children, "who come," one after another, into the weary arms of a really good woman, who yet never knows the meaning of the word *rest* till the coffin-lid shuts her in from all earthly care and pain? Is the self-sacrifice and self-abnegation all to be on one side? Is the "weaker" always to be the stronger in this regard? I could write flaming words about "the inscrutable Providence which has seen fit to remove our dear sister in her youth from the bosom of her young family," as the funeral prayer phrases it.

Providence did nothing of the sort. Poor Providence! It is astonishing how busy people are making up bundles to lay on *His* shoulders! I imagine Providence meant that women, as well as men, should have a right to their own lives. That they, equally with men, should rest when they can go no further on the road without dying. That while the father sits down to smoke the tobacco which "Providence" always seems to furnish him with, although his family may not have bread to eat, his wife should

not stagger to her feet, and try to shoulder again her family cares and expenses.

Sometimes – nay, often – in view of all this, I rejoice in regarding the serene Mrs. Calla-Lily. *She* goes on just like a man. When she is tired she lies down, and stays there till she is rested, and lets the domestic world wag. If she don't feel like talking, she reads. If the children are noisy, she sweetly and cunningly gets out of the way, on that convenient male pretext, "putting a letter in the post-office." She don't "smoke," but she has her little comforts all the same, and at the right time, although the heavens should fall, and little Tommy's shoes give out. She looks as sleek and smooth and fair as if she were *really* a lily; and everybody says, "What a delightful person she is! and how bright and charming at all times!"

Now this spectacle soothes me, after seeing the long procession of bent, hollow-eyed, broken-spirited women who are *legally* murdered.

I exclaim, Good! and think of the old rhyme:

"Look out for thyself,
And take care of thyself,
For nobody cares for thee."

Of course this is very "unamiable" in me, but amiability is not the only or the best quality in the world. I have seen people without a particle of it, as the phrase is often understood, who were the world's real saviours; and I have seen those

human oysters, "amiable" people, till sea-sickness was not a circumstance to the condition of my mental and moral stomach.

What a millennial world this would be, if every one were placed in the niche for which he or she were best fitted. Now I know a capital architect who was spoiled, when he became a minister. A dreadful mess he makes of it working on the spiritual temple, as pastor of a country church; whose worshippers each insist upon shaping every brick and lath to their minds before he puts them together; and then they doubt if his cement will do. Poor man! – I know of a merchant, helplessly fastened to the yardstick, who should be an editor. I know of a lawyer, who has *peace* written all over him, and yet whose life is one interminable fight. I know scores of bright, intelligent women, alive to their finger-tips to everything progressive, good and noble, whose lives, hedged in by custom and conservatism, remind me of that suggestive picture in all our Broadway artist-windows, of the woman with dripping hair and raiment, clinging to the fragment of rock overhead, while the dark waters are surging round her feet. I know little sensitive plants of children, who are no more understood by those who are daily in their angel presence, than the Saviour was by his crucifiers. Children who, mentally, morally, and physically, are being tortured in their several Gethsemanes to the death; and I know sweet and beautiful homes, where plenty, and intelligence, and Christianity dwell, where no little child's laugh has ever been heard, and no baby smile shall ever fill it with blessed sunshine. I know

coarse-natured men and women who curse the earth with their presence, whose thoughts and lives are wholly base and ignoble, and yet who fill high places; and I know heaven's own children – patient, toiling, hopeful – sowing seeds which coarse, hurrying feet trample in the earth as they go, little heeding the harvest which shall come after their careless footsteps.

Life's discipline! That is all we can say of it.

How any one with eyes to see all this, can doubt Immortality, and yet bear their life from one day to another, I cannot tell. How persons can say, in view of all these cross-purposes, I am satisfied with *this* life, and – had I my way – would never leave it, is indeed, a mystery. It must be that the soul were left out of them.

But this doleful talk wont do – will it? I should not dispel illusions – should I? Now, that last is a question I can't settle: whether it were better, if you see a friend crossing a lovely meadow, rejoicing in the butterflies, and flowers, and lovely odors, to warn him that there is a ditch between him and the road, into which he will presently fall; or to let him enjoy himself while he can, and plump into it, without anticipatory fears? What do you think? Anyhow, it is no harm to *wish* you all a happy summer.

Would it not be well for those who report the "dress" of ladies at a public dinner to instruct themselves in advance as to *color*? One can always tell whether a man or a woman is the reporter, by the blunders of the former in mistaking blue for green, lilac for

rose, and black for pink. The world moves on, to be sure, in either case; but since reporting must be done on such infinitesimal matters, it were better it were well done. A lady who studiously avoids flashy apparel does not care to read in the morning paper that "she appeared in a yellow gown trimmed with pink." Perhaps the avoidance of the "flowing bowl" by male reporters would conduce to greater correctness of millinery statement.

THE FLY IN THE OINTMENT

I DO not know who writes the editorials on the "Woman Question" in its various aspects, in our more prominent New York papers. I read them from day to day, with real disappointment at their immaturity, their flippancy, their total lack of manliness, and respect for, or appreciation of, true womanhood. I say this in no spirit of bitterness, but of real sorrow, that men stepping into the responsible position they hold on those papers, have not better considered the subjects of which they treat. That the writers are not known outside the office, seems to me a very unmanly reason for their misrepresentations. Every morning I ask, over my coffee, Have these men mothers, sisters, wives, who so persistently misrepresent the doings of self-respecting, self-supporting, intelligent women? Does *Congress* make no mistakes, that women should be expected, in their pioneering, to have arrived at absolute perfection? Is there no heat, in debate, on *its* floor; no uncourteousness of language? Did not one member, a short time since, call out there to have another member "spanked"? Does the speaker's mallet never call to order, men selected by their constituents, because supposed most intelligently to represent the various local and other interests of the country? Does the cut of a man's hair or coat injuriously or approbatively affect his speech upon the floors? Does anybody care what color it is, or how worn? I ask myself

these questions when I read reports of "strong-minded women's meetings," as they are sneeringly termed, which consist mainly on the absence of a "long train" to their dresses, or the presence of it; on the straightness of their hair, or the frizzing of it; on the lack of ornamentation, or the redundancy of it. This mocking, Mephistopheles-dodging of the real questions at issue, behind flimsy screens, seems to me not only most unworthy of these writers, but most unworthy of, and prejudicial to, the prominent journals in which they appear.

If they think that women make such grave mistakes, – mistakes prejudicial to the great interests they seek publicly to promote, the great wrongs they seek to right, – would it not be kinder and more manly, courteously to point them out, if so be that they themselves know "a more excellent way"? Among all these women, are there *none* who are intelligent, intellectual, earnest, *and modest withal*? Have the editors of these very papers in which these attacks appear, never gladly employed just such, to lend grace, wit, and spirit to their own columns, that they have only sneers and taunts for the cause they espouse, and never a brave, kind, sympathetic recognition of their philanthropic efforts? Is the cause so utterly Quixotic, espoused by such women, who make their own homes bright with good cheer, neatness, taste, and wholesome food, that they cannot gallantly extend a manly hand after it and help them *over* those bright thresholds, and out into a world full of pain and misery, to lift the burden from their less favored sisters?

If they have the misfortune not to know such women among "the strong-minded," would it not be well to seek them out, and better inform themselves on the subjects upon which they daily write?

The pioneer women who have bravely gone forward, and still keep "marching on," undaunted in the face of this unmanly and ungenerous dealing, have, doubtless, counted the cost, and will not be hindered by it. I do not fear that; but I *do* regret that any editor of a prominent paper in New York should belittle it and himself, by allowing any of his employés to keep up this boyish pop-gun firing into the air.

The other night, I attended a lecture, the proceeds of which were to be devoted to a charitable institution for women.

Now here was a man willing to do this for the particular women's charity to be benefited by it, but he couldn't do it without stepping out of his way to sneer at female suffrage and kindred movements which are advocated and engineered by pure, intelligent, cultivated, earnest women, or fixing his seal of approbation on this particular branch of philanthropy, as the only remedy for all the ills that come of an empty purse and a grieved heart.

And just here is the fly in all these philanthropic ointments. Mix your medicines in *my* shop, or they will turn out poisons. That is the spirit. Now I don't believe that one society, or one man or woman, is the pivot on which this universe turns; and wishing well, as I do every progressive, humanitarian movement,

I deplore that its leaders will not keep this fact in mind. I don't say that I wish *women* would keep it in mind, for I am a diligent reader of newspapers, and I see men every day ignoring this broad foundation of civilization. I see them making mouths at each other over a political bone or religious fence; or I hear naughty names called, because one man grabbed a bit of news for his paper, and scampered off with it to the dear public, before his editorial neighbor got scent of it. Oh, women don't do all the gossip and slander and back-biting in the world. They don't make all the silly or stupid speeches either. Nor do they "rush into print," any oftener than certain unquiet male spirits, "thirsting for notoriety," as the phrase goes, who think they know when a colt is a horse, and *vice versa*, better than any other man, because they studied Greek at Oxford. Humbug is not always a female, but when humbug *is* a female, she generally hails from the top round of the ladder! I am happy to say that, though I may be putting a stone into the hands of mine adversary by the admission!

Human nature might be improved, even in the year 1869. How glad the pop-gun clergyman of a small parish is, when some clerical big-gun is supposed to make a false move on the sacerdotal chequer-board! How he rushes publicly to "deplore" that his "dear brother in Christ should lay himself open to the world's censure in this manner"! His "dear brother's" popularity and big salary were not the animus of *that* criticism – oh, no! Now I'm not one of those who believe that "a minister" is certainly a saint, above his fellows; or that Christianity is benefited by

refusing to admit the shortcomings of church-members. I once heard Rev. Dr. Hall preach a sermon on this subject, every word of which was pure gold and ought to be printed in pamphlet form and placed in the pews of all our churches.

"Mix your medicines in my shop, or they will be poisons". How sick I am of it! There is so much elbow room in the world, why fight only for one corner? But men, set us "weak women" such a terrible example, fighting and squabbling about straws, and whining when they are defeated. Now, if instead of wasting their time this way, or idling it away as fashionable loungers, – I speak after the manner of the New York – to women, – if instead of belonging to useless up-town clubs, where with the heads of their canes in their mouths, they sit in the day-time, measuring passing female ankles, or drinking and talking male scandal, or betting; – if instead they would – each butter-fly son of them – take some good, interesting book, and finding some tenement house, sit down of an evening and amuse some laboring man, who would else flee from the discomforts of such a place to the nearest grog-shop, how noble would this male butterfly of Fifth Avenue then appear! In fact, this particular form of benevolence commends itself to me as the only one that could rescue him from the butterfly existence of up-town clubs.

A thought strikes me! As the "New York – " remarks, when advising women to teach sewing to poor girls, "but perhaps these female butterflies of Fifth Avenue don't know themselves how to sew." Alas! should these male butterflies of the Fifth Avenue

club-houses not know how to read, when they get to the tenement house of their poor brother!

Now, to conclude, I see nothing antagonistic to a sewing-machine in a woman's vote, but the Editor of the New York – is always throwing a blanket over a woman's head, for fear she will see a ballot-box. You may make soup, my dear, graciously says he, for poor women; or flannel shirts for very little paupers, if you'll promise not to burn your fingers in politics. That never'll do, my dear! It is *not*

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

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

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