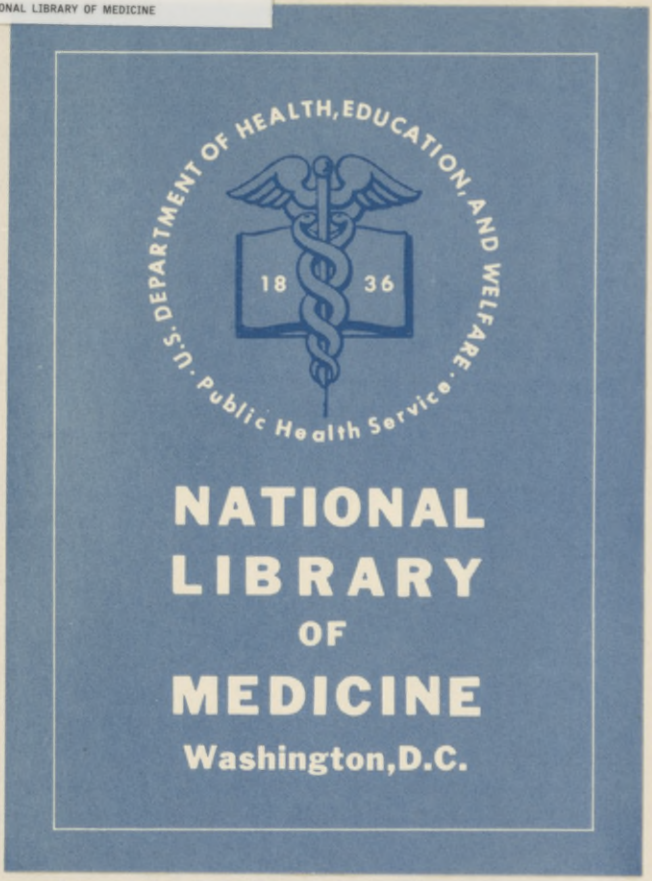

WOMEN

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WOMEN

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I THE WOMEN ARE SPLENDID

I THE WOMEN ARE SPLENDID

i

Superficially, amid all the destruction which has accompanied its progress, the war may seem to the inquiring mind to have created new orders and new activities; but in fact it has served, biologically, only to provide opportunities for the growth and development of activities already present in embryo. It is as though that hackneyed historical remark that occasions produce Napoleons had become universalized. In every country, among neutrals, one would infer, as well as among the belligerents, circumstances have given rise to fresh needs, and the needs have provoked at any rate partial substitutions of one thing for another; until, still with our minds groping under the shock of realities so violent, we have come to think of everything as changed. This is an illusion. Noth-

ing changes, except by miracle; and the world is essentially the same, as human beings are the same. Only the streams of human activities have been diverted.

Apart from the diversion, often rough enough, of men and men's minds from the peaceful channels of ordinary life into those rules and apathies inseparable from a military régime, there has been nothing more frequently noted in England and in Germany than the psychological and executive development of women amid the bizarre conditions of war-time. In every country the women, hitherto increasingly restless and unsatisfied by the social opportunities provided for them, have become what is called "splendid." They have first of all grasped the primitive and inescapable fact of the war; and they have proceeded to meet that fact with a steadfastness that has moved the more sedentary of their own sex, and the less observant of the other sex, to a kind of triumphing wonderment at such adaptability. Not all men and women have they so moved; because there are always eager minds speculating—dashing hither and thither like water-skaters upon the surface of a

stream—which have been preoccupied with the incessant readjustment in the affairs of mankind, that strange complex which is never simplified, never still. Much was foreseen by these eager minds. Much is still foreseen—not, it is true, definitely; but with imagination, which, having grasped a conception, yields, expands, and imperceptibly embraces all manifestations without ever losing its hold upon the essential thought. It was noticed that in England, with which country this essay is principally concerned, the women were the first to grasp the significance of the German invasion of Belgium. While men were appalled or made resolute or irresolute by this calamity, still arguing about responsibility and right, about such relatively academic questions as the State and the Individual, about financial stability and raw materials, imports, exports, and the interruption of commerce and the humanities, the women already heard guns, already saw the Germans in our streets, already glimpsed the horrors of sack and pillage. While men still imagined that continental women (so different from our own, so distinctly and mysteriously "other women"

as a species separate from their own wives and daughters) were accustomed to being raped, so that the hardships of war were to them among the inevitable distresses of life, women knew that the Belgian women were their sisters. Some—the intellectual women, for the most part, and thus imitative of the masculine attitude—were callous; but the majority, instinctively and maternally selfish, were stung to an excited perception that without a solid wall of male flesh between themselves and the Germans they might fare as tragically as Belgian women had already done. Moreover, they had an interest in life at last. Their instinctive hunger for emotion was immediately gratified. Passion for that illusory benefit—the vote—was stilled. Dreams of rational and responsible life were abandoned in this first thrilling shock of armaments. Here, they said in effect, is war; and war is a woman's affair. Intrinsically it is a woman's affair. Men may fight because they are made to fight, on the score of dynastic interests, of commercial interests, on all sorts of ostensible grounds; but the individual man, deep in his heart, where he keeps that secret emotion that

moves him to splendours, fights for us. Men always have so fought: they always will continue to fight for us. They fight for our safety, for the continuance of their kind; and we are the mothers of the race. It is here to be read in the histories of all humanity. That truth, once perceived, and pride in the fighter thus aroused, has never been lost sight of. It is the fact that amid all the horrible vanities to which the war has given rise in Englishwomen they have never faltered in their genuine and admirable acknowledgment of this everlasting debt to Englishmen. If the women have been quite unpardonably "splendid," if some of the younger among them have carried their acknowledgment to a point of voluptuous sentimentality, it must never be forgotten that, as a whole, they showed from the first a definite sense of fundamental reality, and were instinctively ready to sacrifice their individual men to the greater necessity of the hour as they conceived it. One may read into this, if one will, a barbarous insensibility, a detached selfishness, or a wonderful and bewildering kind of patriotic self-sacrifice. Whatever the interpretation, the fact is undeniable.

The immediate local activities of women were more open to question; but they arose from this perception that the war must be fought by men, stimulated by women. Heedless of many things in the shape of decency and patience, they armed themselves, in parts of the country, with white feathers which they presented to casually-met young men who appeared as though they had not volunteered for the army. The idea was to bring sinners to repentance. Old ladies accosted stationary young men with the indignant question: "How is it *you* are not in the army?" Some even of those in uniform were asked, in moments of great and violent depression, how it was that they were not at the front. There were, accordingly, moments when it seemed as though the sex's one conception of warfare lay in the uniforming of every male in the country. They set themselves most vigorously to their task of recruiting. In every town and suburb and village they discussed the single men (in those early days it was the single men who were wanted for the army, on the widely-diffused, but fallacious, assumption that their departure interfered less with the working of affairs, the sta-

bility of the home, and economic outlay in matters of separation allowances) who ought to "go." They were not just. They were rather excited. They were easily led, as they still are led, by the most crude newspaper stunts. As a sex they were not, and are not, peculiar in that respect. Nevertheless, those most subject to the influence of press stunts are always those who believe themselves either unaffected or safeguarded by the action of the proposed course. For a time mothers ruled out from this form of patriotic persecution their own sons, with whose temperaments, or juvenile ailments, or special talents for safe employment, they were familiar. This did not last. The ruse was observed, and frustrated by abusive disclosure. When fashionable women, and those of the middle-class (whose feeling for their young men is pride rather than the passionate intimacy of close domestic association), had recognized that it was the correct thing for their own unmarried men to apply for commissions, they quickly began interviewing their male servants (such as they could spare), the lads in the villages, and the young men they met and knew, for the purpose

of filling the ranks. A holy zeal moved them, and they became disgusting in the eyes of many men—even of those men who felt no immediate indisposition to shed their blood in a cause which they believed to be just. The women's instinct was true. They had found a *métier*. The army must be made, as we all knew, if the war was to continue. And it needed a woman's hand to make it. Not Lord Kitchener, but the women of England, made the new armies.

The attitude of the women of England was expressed, once and finally, by the old lady in the most-hated recruiting poster. "Go, lad!" said she, to a rather C III-looking youth. "It's your Duty!" The urge took other forms. The more finessing ladies said, "I know you *want* to go!" "We don't want to lose you; but we think you *ought* to go," sang the cajoling music-hall artiste. Heigho! How long ago it all seems, and for how long have the slackers been heroes, and died, and suffered untellable horrors which the women glean and emotionally, exultingly, repeat to each other! There was no compulsion in those days: there was moral suasion. It was the women of England who engineered the moral

suasion. These women were ably seconded by even the most thoughtless girls in the country, ever delighted by a uniform (though it be only that of a special constable or a commissionaire). It became self-evident, as a music-hall song of the time expressed it, that:

> "The lads in khaki get the nice girls,
> And the lads in blew get the nice girls tew."

Some there were among the lower orders (whose lack of fashion makes fashion less exigent, and whose affection is more roughly expressed in a desire for constant association with those they love) who shielded their sons and lovers for months. They said: "Let every other man go. My Jim's not going." They disliked the war. In general, however, the instinct for war was greater than any individual humaneness, or horror, or selfishness. The obstinate feminine pacifists, too individualistic in their attitude to life, were overborne. The army was made. It was made because the women of England saw the reality of the war. I shall never forget that on the day war was known to be declared I found myself in a railway carriage with a

young couple. The youth, with his mind not yet dominated by the new fact, indicated heavy clouds without, and carelessly (or perhaps to introduce a diversion) said: "A black day." The girl, brooding, her face dark but unconsciously obstinate, answered: "Yes, a black day for England." The youth, whose wavering eyes suggested a mind full of irrelevancies, still apparently thought of the weather. Already the girl was seeing the truth of the state of war, and her stronger nature was rising to meet the terrific emergency. She was seeing her lover in a fresh aspect, judging him anew. I wonder how long it was before that youth was in the army. I wonder if he is dead, or maimed, or a lice-eaten prisoner in some German camp. I do not wonder at all about the immediate cause of his joining the army. He was not conscripted. He was sent.

ii

Having set in motion the huge plans for making a continental army out of peace-loving Englishmen, the women were faced with a new difficulty. The withdrawal of men from civil

employment left many places to be filled, and the recalled men of greater age were not to be had in inexhaustible numbers. It is much the same during a taxi-famine, when one would give one's evening shoes for any horse-drawn vehicle. Others have secured the old growlers; the supply is insufficient. One falls back upon an altogether different device for getting home. The difficulty of labour shortage was again met by women. It was as though the difficulty was for them no more than an opportunity. Everywhere women showed themselves—especially women with no experience whatever—ready to fill positions hitherto reserved for men. Women clerks swarmed to our offices; women road-sweepers laboured in our suburban streets; women appeared as conductors upon our omnibuses and tramcars; women ticket-collectors, women window-cleaners, chauffeuses, women police, and inexhaustible women-friends for our wounded soldiers, rose as if by magic from every side of this mystifying land of latent energy. "We can do it. Let the men go," they said in effect. The word "let" became in a few weeks the word "make." No longer were

women to wait and watch, nerveless and tearful, as one had imagined them to have done through all the hopeless dawns of the Victorian period. They could and would *act*, both indirectly (as heretofore) and directly. They did so. Some of them were competent, others not. The story is told of a lady who twice consulted a phrenologist; on the second occasion after spending six weeks in employment as a Government clerk. "Wonderful!" said the phrenologist. "When you came to me six weeks ago your heart governed your head. Now your head governs your heart!" This is a true story. We who have seen the rush of women into Government and commercial offices, into factories of every kind, into sensible masculine garments, into outdoor employments, into practically every department of active life (including what has been unkindly called the khaki and cosmetic brigade), can testify to the adaptability and energy of the sex. Many women in offices are more careful than the men they replace; and if they are often erratic, talkative, and "difficult" (what Mrs. Stopes says men call "capricious") the physical causes of this "difficulty" must not be forgotten, and the

devoted service of the women must be set off against their native peculiarities. The devotion, it is true, is not universal, as annoyed employers testify. Women respond to slackness in a department of work as readily as men can do, and they take advantage of slackness with a bravado that makes the action aggressively impudent to the disconcerted male. They bluff. Man, untrained, has no weapons against an *employé* who bluffs. The shouting or the severe reprimand which cows a dependent man has no effect upon a girl—no visible effect. She draws the tips of her fingers along her employer's table, her head down, her lips compressed; and she becomes obstinate. If she is very able to bluff, she smiles kindly. For this reason, some employers will welcome back their men from the war. The same mysteriousness which in ordinary love-making lends allure to a woman is aggravating in other circumstances. The employer cannot be in love with *all* his women-assistants. They would not allow it. They have not enough *esprit de corps* for that. And so he is rather irritated. With men, he tells you, you know where you are. Not so with women. The sim-

ple-minded crude fellows who run our businesses in their middle-age do not know how to deal with the other sex. The other sex takes advantage of them. What with tea at every opportunity, groups of chatterers, occasional flirtation, and the thousand slacknesses possible in every office where the employer has too much work to attend to personally, there is a new atmosphere in our commercial houses and Government departments. The women have arrived. It is all part of the glorious fun of war.

Offices, fortunately, are not the only places to which our women have been drawn in the emergency of war. They have taken up work that is done with the hands, and women (most women) work better with their hands than with their heads. They are accustomed to doing things with their hands; and whereas clerical work is uninteresting and does not wholly absorb all available attention, manual work is something the progress and completion of which may be a source of pride. There is something to show for it, unless the work be the purely mechanical filling of shells, or something of that kind. To drive a motor-car is a different thing

again. To conduct a tramcar is less thrilling, but it is varied in interest. It is better than housework. To police a park—an unappetising task—is at least to walk about in the open air. And in all these things there is a beautiful new sense of responsibility. There is the feeling that they are doing things they never thought, until the time came, they could do. There is a colour of romance, of adventure, in the everyday life of war-time that no peace task can give. There is a sense of power. Women, the sentimentalist says, are changed by the war. Not a bit of it. They are only happy in it. Whatever their own uniform—and it is very strange and amusing to see with what delight our girls and women adorn themselves with uniforms and ribbons denoting war-service—they do remain through it all, as they will continue steadfastly to remain, essentially the creatures they were before the war. The rosebush is not less a rosebush before it blooms than when it performs its annual miracle. If during the last four years women have surprised weak men (and the dullest of their own sex, still fuddled with a sense of sex inferiority) by their energy,

their folly, their caprice, and their marvellous and unwearying "splendours"; if they have shown themselves hard, stubborn, cruel, and quite primitive in their pursuits and admirations, the surprise is due to previous misconception. They have not changed. It is only that some poor silly poetry-believing men, lost in the vapours of Victorianism, are seeing women for the first time, as though the prism were broken and the heart vouchsafed. The experience to humanity is worth while, as every manifestation of essential nature is to the observer worth while, although it is one of the experiences which are being bought nowadays at such a terrible price. It is startling; but it is good for clear thinking. It is a step into the open. It is another, and a most vitally important, stage in the development of that sex-hatred which is going to be the most absorbing conflict of the future.

iii

In trying to account for the extraordinary attraction which war has for women it is hard to steer a path between emotional muddle-headed-

ness and cynicism. Emotional muddle-headedness sees only a vague "splendour," without attempting to explain the splendour as anything but a response to the fervour called patriotism; cynicism, equally stupid in its negative attitude, shrugs shoulders and smiles knowingly in order to hide ignorance of the secret. The explanation probably lies beyond the range of the ordinary brain, such as mine; and so I will not try to do more than to offer a tentative one. It seems to be the fact that the average woman is deficient in any profound power of imagination —the intuitive perception and co-ordination of consequences and a general power to grasp things as wholes. Instead, women have a vehement but shallow sympathy with suffering —principally, since that is the most visible to them, of physical suffering. They have always admired physical strength and physical courage, because in all times of violence, from the most primitive to the present, physical strength and physical courage have alone afforded women adequate protection against the excesses of rival combative males. Physical strength in men, with its complement of stirring deeds, rouses

the imagination of women as no more delicate attributes can do. The strong man, going triumphantly upon his way among men less physically strong, has an élan, a punch, in his conduct and in his general bearing towards waiters and such like people, which is irresistibly attractive to the slavish instinct of women. Women in this respect are like children attacked by those more vigorous than themselves, instinctively relying upon the retribution to be inflicted by parents ("I'll tell mummer of you!") or by something called "my big brother." It is the outcome of their relative physical inferiority. We always over-estimate the value of powers which we do not ourselves possess. When they are used, or are liable to be used, by those inimical to us, we particularly respond to that counter-power which is made to remove personal danger by the exertion upon our behalf of greater strength of a similar character. This is so in imaginary as well as in true things, as when our pulses beat more rapidly at stage discomfiture of the villain by some splendour, or fortunately-timed intervention, upon the part of the hero. Weak ourselves, we love strength, we love any-

thing that is simple and physically heroic. When the hero of *In Kedar's Tents* (that most characteristic of the works of Henry Seton Merriman) is in danger, of which the hitherto recalcitrant heroine alone has an inkling, it is said that "his smile of cool intrepidity made her heart leap." Our own hearts, stimulated to the action by an adroit author, perform a similar feat. It is a form of weakness, of falsely-induced emotion (at least, of false standards of emotion, since emotion ought not to respond to any sort of faked stimulus); but in fiction as in life we can forgive everything—every peccadillo—except hesitancy or complexity of motive, or obscurity of action. We are so conscious of weakness and inefficiency in ourselves, that our sentiment rushes out to any semblance of strength, of determination, though it be only papier-mâché painted to seem to be a rock. We love the selfish man or woman more than the unselfish, the assertive more than the modest, because unselfishness offends that tragic impulse which makes us desire to see the visible and incontrovertible triumph of matter over mind. In half our marketable fiction the hero is a person of honourable

strength, and inferior intellectual capacity, opposed to a subtle demon of complexity. The less imaginative we are, the more a blow seems to us to clinch the argument. At last, we feel, there is something tangible in this world of muffled discontents and wounds and endurances. The Lady of Shalott was half-sick of shadows, it will be remembered. She did not say she was half-sick of painted lathes. They would always deceive her. So selfishness, that tough and temerarious disregard of others, summons a train of servants. The selfish man, as no other, has his continued conquests, because, in his disregard, and his lack of imaginative sympathy, he seems to lead, to go straight to his goal: as has the rake, who exhibits strength in another guise. As the song—again from that institution, the music-hall, which of every other is the most closely in touch with contemporary human nature—so perfectly and so truly expresses it:

"The worse you are, the more the ladies like you."

Not virtue do we love—especially if we are women; but performance, arrogance, persist-

ence, self-concentrated heedlessness of consequences, deeds of reckless daring or of physical vehemence that make the flesh creep and the pulses beat more fast. The rake has his harem: the strong man, no less, has his legions of adorers—as passionate as the moth—among weaker or hermaphroditic men as well as among women. He may be without perception or kindness (and any callous self-gratification necessarily involves a kind of obtuseness), without most of the major and the minor virtues; but he is what he has always been, the woman's ideal of a man. He "does" things. He may do them splendidly or clumsily (but the man who does anything splendidly is more frequently of a different type —a nervous, highly-strung type, not corresponding to the feminine ideal). He meets emergency with thumping action, with forceful energy; weighs it not with subtle thought. Women do not like thought. It fascinates some of them, and they fear it; but they do not love it. In love it is their enemy, and so they suspect its corrosive influence throughout life. To them it is as horrid, as disconcerting, as a blackbeetle. They repel it. Only in times of peace, of genu-

ine stagnation, do our Bunthornes arise; and then their triumph is due to the fact that they are charlatans, and not the real article at all.

That—the love of strength and the strong man—is one reason for women's love of war. It creates the part of the strong man as nothing else can do. It clothes him in uniform. It breaks the routine of life. Women detest nowadays, and as war has always been popular with women they probably always have detested, the routine of life; because so many of them suffer weary years of imprisonment in which their dreams and juvenile pretences and egotisms are slowly choked by this deadly poison of routine. Moreover it must be borne in mind, as a far deeper cause, that in general women have not the resources in peace time that men have. Ennui is more common among them than among men. In a later chapter I shall attempt an explanation of this; but it is enough here to point out that women *must* have emotional excitement. It is essential to them if they are to live any life that is not merely the monotonous passage of days. The ordinary life of ordinary women does not produce excitement: their excitements

in general are inventions. This is what drives them to gossip, to scandal-mongering (at which, of course, sedentary men are more adept, though most men gossip less than their women-folk and listen in stupor to the narratives of their wives and sweethearts). With war the case is different. Indignations and excitements are everyday affairs. The discovery of a pacifist, the morning newspaper's horrifying outrage, the thrill of some brave deed; always the subtle grinding dread that the Entente Powers may be defeated. All these things act as a tonic. When to that tonic is added a call to willing service; when they can feel that they too are "doing" something—not to help the country but secretly to gratify the incessant craving of their vanity—war has few horrors that are not made worth while. The eager awaiting of news from beloved and sacrificed men, the joys of their return on leave, the dreadful excitements of death and wounds, of lamentation and mourning, of hurried wooing and sweet surrender—all these have their call in the various kinds of women. Even frenzy is better to them than slow enervation by the loss of beauty, of elas-

ticity, by the starvation of the emotional faculties.

The relation of the sexes, also, has been affected profoundly. The truth will probably not be seen until after the war. Now, when we are so excited, when war-marriages have become a habit and when many young girls seem to have no occupation but the delights of association with military men, there is no possibility of striking a balance sheet. Clearly some of the liberation is good; but a greater proportion is very likely evil. The serious flirtations of war-time, the passionate farewells, even the secret abandonments in so many instances to the sexual act, justified sufficiently to the parties as it is upon sentimental grounds, are alike an extraordinary call to the sensations and an extraordinary satisfaction of them. Greedy as she is of emotional excitement, and stirred quite out of conventional timidity and self-disguise and prudery by the sense of strength and strength of sacrifice which she has called into being, woman lives intensely in war-time as she could never live in peace. She is transfigured, unshackled. Already essentially militarist, she is tasting all

the joys of romance, all the tremblings of actual contact with death and passion, about which in normal times she can only read. The sense of this contact with vital and dreadful things is immense to women. Their suppressed love of so many things is being gratified as never before. Their love of excitement, their love of strength in men, their love of surrender to such strength. More continuously and more completely sensual than men, they are living in a marvelling delirium of the senses; or they are tasting in new occupations the sense of new responsibility, of new power. Afterwards, in the reaction, as I have tried to show later, they may have to pay a bitter price; but if war has one effect more than another upon the poor struggling nature of mankind it is that it blots out the future. We live precariously from day to day. No wonder there is a momentary spread of fatalism among us. No wonder that we so convulsively put aside thoughts of what sorrow is still to come. The only thought we can entertain is for today, and, at some distant hour, for some further instalment of happiness when the excitement shall be renewed, purged of all the morbid hu-

mours of dread that make us now so reckless. Snatching at happiness, at power, at the fulfilment of all those ambitions that have in the past been stultified; intoxicated by the zest and endurance and horror of a life which takes cognizance of the ruins of France and Belgium, of Serbia and Russia, women are enjoying this war. They would exclaim with horror at an accusation so terrible if it were applied individually. Nevertheless you cannot purchase splendour for nothing. Splendour has its price, as happiness has its price, and excitement. The women are splendid.

II CHARACTERISTICS OF WOMEN

II CHARACTERISTICS OF WOMEN

i

One or two of the characteristics of women as they have been noticeably displayed in the course of the war have been indicated in the first chapter. Those were the love of physical strength, which is an almost universal passion, the faculty of imitativeness (which is not peculiar to the sex, and which indeed is exhibited largely in a merely superficial degree, as in obedience to fashion); the blind determination to pursue an instinctively-grasped notion to its extremity; and the passion of cruelty. The passion of cruelty is very strongly marked in most women. There is in them a love of torture which in men is reserved to certain much-execrated tyrants of old, and to those whose religious or other sensual mania causes them to gloat over wounded animals, to dismember insects, and so on. When a horse struggles in the roadway the spectators,

clutching each other as the horse plunges, but never running beyond eye-range, are for the most part women. Men actively interfere: women watch. Women love the death-scene; they morbidly enjoy wakes, and all the details of death. Where men laugh and make tedious jokes about obstetrics, women, when alone together, coarsely discuss the subject in never-ending detail. Their conversation turns constantly upon it. Physical abnormalities absorb them. The little girl who goes nearer and nearer to one who is in pain is the type of her sex. Where men are callous and turn away, unless they are moved by the desire to help, women stand watching from a sheer love of sensation. Self-torturers are more common among women than among men. So are drug-takers. Men have other outlets; they work off their distempers more readily; women, the pure egoists, or, as a modern phraseology has it, the pure "introverts," dwell upon their injuries or their sins, and take pleasure in self-inflicted pain, whether mental or physical. It is a need of their beings.

Determination is another characteristic in

women which is different in kind from determination in men. Men are told they must do a thing, or they are told that they cannot do a thing, or they think that a thing should be done for certain definite reasons or ends. Accordingly they do the thing. Women are dissimilar. They instinctively wish to do something other than that which they are told to do. They sink helplessly under the suggestion that they cannot do it, for their confidence is bravado; and, feeling sure that any proclamation of inability is true, they brood on their weakness and turn assertion into fact. Finally, they are not in the habit of rationalizing their inclinations. From time immemorial they have been made to believe in inspiration. Accordingly, they await the bidding of God, or the bidding of impulsive love; or, reaching an unwarrantable conclusion, they hold tenaciously to it on the ground that, being women, they are divinely gifted with instant vision of truth. This attitude of mind is ineradicable. Asked why they "know" that such an one is in love with such an other, they assume the expression of Monna Lisa and reply, sufficiently, "I *know*." It will be interesting, in a

moment, to analyse this preposterous claim to deep-seated wisdom.

The imitativeness of women is a very strange phenomenon. Men are imitative in ideas, in manner, in general attitude. They observe something in another man that delights them, and they begin to imitate the delightful object. In personal matters men imitate individualistically. When they imitate in the herd one may suspect that they do it to please their wives. Almost all masculine imitativeness in clothes, for example, is not personal, but due to wifely interference. Thus, after marriage a man is dressed in accordance with his wife's taste; before marriage he dresses to please the girl he believes to have made up her mind to marry him; only in adolescence is he the purely imitative cub. On the other hand women habitually imitate in droves. The girls in a suburb are often so much alike in appearance, in style, and in drawl, that one is never sure to whom one must take off one's hat in casual encounter. Only by the assumption of such herd-imitativeness can one account for the painful vagaries of feminine fashion. One has seen thousands of

girls and women dressed in styles that are manifestly unsuited to them as individuals. In a period when slimness and short skirts are the ideal (because they happen to be the commoner lot) one knows that a long skirt indicates—not the rebel, not the conscious individualist, but the unhappy girl with flat feet or bandy legs, who is forced by sheer necessity to avert her face and pass the fashion by. The plump girl screws herself into the fashion. No matter if her ankles are rotund, if her corsets move ridiculously as she walks (she can't see the movements, and other girls, although amused, do not tell her about them): she must be in the fashion, or hide. That is one easy instance. A less obvious one is the use of popular colours irrespective of complexion. This is criminal, but it is due to stupidity or to the morbid passion of self-immolation. Another is the following of fashion in the matter of hats. Must they be small, they are small. Large, they are large. With strings, they are worn with strings. Apart from personal idiosyncrasy in the matter of carriage, our girls look as much alike as they can manage to do. And yet, pathetically, each one will tell

her lover that she is "not like other girls." This is untrue. She is as like other girls as she can be in all externals. She conforms as nearly as possible to the prevailing type.

The love of physical strength in men has been dealt with. In one way it is to be explained by the notion that brute force is a powerful protective agency. It certainly is that. But protection is not all that women desire. It is not nearly all. Moreover, the man with physical strength who also has brains is less popular than the stupid bully. Granted that brains and physical strength in combination are rare, there is still to be offered a partial explanation of the preference for strength. While women are not, as a rule, profoundly intellectual, they are quite extraordinarily quick-witted in matters tending to their own advantage. In love, which I believe will always be the principal affair in a woman's life, the man with brains is difficult to manœvre. He can be cheated, as he so often is, by women of lesser refinement, because, being modest and regarding himself as unattractive, he is grateful to any girl who seeks him in his isolation. But he is also moody, fractious, sus-

picious, and tangential. Unless he is hopelessly and sigh-provokingly dull and unloverlike. But the man of strength, without brains, is a different proposition. He can be sported with. As the brain of the elephant is to that of man, so is this fine fellow's brain to that of women. He can be roused. All the animal strength in him, promising, although she does not know it, healthy children and inexhaustible domestic communion, is fine to behold, and is roused by feminine attractiveness, astuteness. He advances, sure in his pride of body that he is worthy the great sport of coquetry. The woman withdraws, teases, escapes, exulting in the thrilling sex game. She is all taut, as if with steel and elastic, the ideal toreador. She is transfigured. A new ichor runs in her veins. Not only does this type of man offer her the magnificent target for her arms: he is better yet. He pursues. The man with fine character may dubitate too long, may count the cost to the woman of any failure in married life. He hesitates, and is lost in the maëlstrom of things fore-calculated. The man of brains may torment himself and the woman with a thousand sophistries and scruples. The

man of strength, emotionally clumsy, reeking though he may be with dulness and essential stupidity, yet is the delight of the sporting woman. From him alone can she expect capture. Flushed and excited and confident, he responds to her darts. The ineffable joy of surrender is alone to be obtained through the strong man. He may bore her, may ill-treat her; he may be bovine or selfish or cantankerous. In the love period he alone can gratify her fancy, because her fancy is based upon instinct. He is the potential father of her children.

ii

The woman's belief in her mysteriousness, her own delicacy of mind, and her own piercing insight into all emotional matters whatsoever, is a truly astonishing factor in her daily conduct. It is this belief which sustains her in many a humiliation. The more stupid she is, the more she hopes to mystify. It is as though, striving to reach her soul, one played a silly game of hide and seek, ending with a struggle, a pulled curtain,—and the discovery that the cupboard is

bare. The mysteriousness of women is thus a sedulously cultivated legend. The great mystery is that there is no mystery at all: only a pretence. And yet not wholly a pretence, for so many women are self-deluded. While men rub against other men, like and dislike, quarrel, are reconciled, are irreconcilable, women cultivate their greedy ego. To any man not wholly sedentary—the male author is almost certainly one who has a streak of the feminine in his nature: hence his egregious vanity—egotism is a natural enough symptom of health. Egotism I take to be a sort of self-complacency, a self-confidence. Egoism is the turning inward of the mind, the habit of regarding all events as they solely relate to the egoist. That is why women are all egoists and mostly egomaniacs. While men can perform disinterested acts, women are gratifying their vanity in acts which only seem to be disinterested. Vanity is the key to their hearts, the prime secret of their natures. Watch the difference between a girl and a young man dressed in new clothes. How sheepish and uncomfortable he is, in case anybody shall notice him: how his collar hurts and his coat

catches him under the arms! But a girl—how different! Watch her assurance, her pretty self-consciousness, her swift glances demanding approval. No sheepishness there! Does she know one well, there will be a sidelong look, a gradual gravitation towards one, a wait in expectation of praise. Then, the delay unbearable, a quick whisper, "How d'you like my new dress?" Seriously, solemnly, the requisite praise is received. If one is very inexperienced, as, alas! many young men were inexperienced in the days before the war, one is touched with the pathos of such a timid wish to please, such a lack of confidence in her own judgment. "Do I look nice?" "God bless you, dear; you're charming!" Poor, poor innocent young man! He is enthralled by her captivating shy whisper in reply: "I'm so glad you like me." More confidentially, in solitude, in the myth-making mood: "You see, I'm very . . ." Then the male's long servitude begins. If he is very young such endless disclosure appears astounding—a revelation of the secret tenderness of the girl's soul. He is drunken with visions of shrinking reserves, beautiful aspirations, wrongs

endured, generosities to girls less pretty, or less "nice," or less well-dressed than this one girl in her native element. He leaves her, treading air. "She's *wonderful*, WONDERFUL!" he exclaims (as though he were a character in one of Henry James's later novels). But she isn't wonderful at all. She is simply practising. Her revelations, breathless, inconsequential, are the necessary relief to her ego; and, what is more, she is engaged in perfecting the imaginary character to which she will defer all through her life.

It is a sort of idol-worship, this imaginary character and the part it plays in a woman's life. Just as children invent a familiar or alter-ego, to whom they confide things, with whom they play, and share love and adventures, so every woman has this fictitious self to which she bows and pays homage. A woman is thus always two persons, and she deceives herself and others by the contradiction which persists between her normal and legendary selves.

It is not the normal self that is supposed to know everything by heaven-sent flashes of intuition. It is the "other" self. The normal self is the one that gets easily discouraged, that says

"Oh, *I'm* no good," that drudges and obeys and discontentedly goes through with the practical affairs of daily life. The legendary self knows everything. If the legend makes from the blue, from sheer contrariness or skittishness, a dogmatic assertion regarding a man, a woman, an "affair," and in fact any human relation, the normal woman humbly accepts it as being quite specially *revealed* from God knows where. She proclaims it as such a revelation. "How do you know?" she is asked. It is sacrilege against her legendary self, which is like Shakespeare in Matthew Arnold's painful sonnet—

"Others abide our question—thou alone art free."

She replies, "I *know*." That is why, for so many centuries, it has been a recognized splutter on the part of men that it is a waste of time to argue with a woman. It is like arguing about facts with the disciple of a visionary. The disciple is not sure what his master would reply, but he devoutly assumes that no challenge is valid. Disciples are rare: women are always with us. That is why we generalize about women, and not about disciples.

Destroy the legendary woman, and the normal woman dies. The legendary one is her soul. She has no other. That is why a woman instinctively dreads a man with brains. It is in case he slay or mortally wound her soul, which is her legendary self. It is ever of her legendary self that she speaks in confession to young men, receives inspirations about the legend as she talks. She first of all differentiates herself from any other young woman whatever. This effect assured, she narrates her various "misunderstandings," often with an unobtrusive glance at her subject, watching the result of the monologue, instinctively testing its verisimilitude, its sham candour; developing and consolidating the legend at every word. There is often no intention to deceive. The tale flows, and a girl's tongue is a free instrument, and her brain is abnormally quick in such matters. The legendary figure is exalted. The Queen can do no wrong. Deep in her heart the girl enthrones herself. That is why women so rarely achieve disinterested action. That is why, as a modern observer has remarked, women are not really interested in anything at all, although they can

simulate interest in any subject whatsoever. Their first interest lies, not outside their own lives, but within their own hearts. Sometimes the self is like a Queen, swelling with a gorgeous sense of power; sometimes it is like a dead baby, to be morbidly fondled and wept over with shocking abandonment to grief; sometimes it is a mocking sprite, sometimes a tragic child. It takes every form. It lives and grows with every frustration as with every sorrow. Joys do not develop the ego: sorrows do. Loneliness does. The lonely person would in any case have to invent an ego, for the mere relief of solitude and silence. The woman, so often condemned to lonely hours, has one ready made. It is her child, her mother, the imperious voice of all the wisdoms of all the ages. And it is a bubble, which a corrosive mind can destroy at one encounter.

iii

It is the duality which has been described that makes any man's relation with a woman so peculiar. Mrs. Stopes ascribes to physical causes much of the so-called "capriciousness" of wo-

men. There is no doubt great truth in her suggestion. Physical causes may account for what I have been discussing above. I shall presently mention other phenomena which I attribute to physical causes; but I am not a materialist, and so I have not yet reached the point of regarding women as mere earth. It is an old-fashioned belief, certainly as old as Fielding, that women, no less than men, act according to the impulse dominant at the specific moment. Mental causes (*i. e.*, natural reaction to and from circumstances, and all those mysteries of personal influence and relationship) must account for much that is otherwise unaccountable. What is so evident, however, and in this they differ from men, is that women are born with incipient mania, the mania of the ego. That mania, encouraged from early days by fellow members of their sex (to be precise, by their mothers), grows with every inhibition. The natural impulse of frankness, developed more or less in boys until they reach the age of puberty and secretiveness, is checked in girls. Always they are forced inwards upon the so-called mysteries of their sex. All their thoughts are the result of

hearsay and introspection. They have had in the past, in early years, no such large out-spreading life open to them as boys have had. They may try to be like their brothers; they play boys' games from emulation or from beautiful naïve affection; but at last they draw away from the young masculine disdain of these brothers; and in that moment of agonized withdrawal the legendary woman is born. There comes a time when the legendary woman is a necessity. She is the offspring of vanity out of vacuum.

The period between that hour of estrangement and the later coming-together of the sexes in what most writers upon sex describe sentimentally as the time of mating is the formative period. In boys this is a question of physical growth and routine education. In girls it is a question of rapid maturing, of great introspection. The consequence is that, respectively, girls are very much more mature than boys at the moment of reconciliation. Through long living with the legendary girl they have become neophytes of the first water. They are full of moods and intuitions, hesitatingly profound in all perceptions relating to sex. They have now an immense ad-

vantage in these matters; untold opportunities for experimenting upon the confused young male with his head full of the things that a young man ought not to know, prurient-minded, but almost grotesquely idealizing so far as the women of his own family are concerned. Some of them do not use those opportunities. They live remote, and get gawky and provincial or suburban in bearing. Others go very gaily into the attractive vortex of life. They dance, they play tennis. With strong bodies, and this strange reserve that comes from the mystic adoration of legend which is all the time in progress within them, they may well baffle the simple analysis of their contemporary males. "I can't understand you," say these reddening boys, aghast at an unscrupulousness that offends against the schoolboy code (not always a defensible code). "Men never do understand women," gently and triumphantly respond the myth-worshippers. It is a preposterous claim, direct from the inner legend-woman. It has never yet been authenticated. *E pur se muove!* It will never be overthrown as a claim, because men are either (1) cynics, and therefore silent in melancholy; (2) sensualists,

and therefore gross and disgusting in their concern with women in one aspect alone; (3) simple persons, frankly adoring the legend; (4) too gentle men to synthesize their unavoidable perceptions (which they regard as treason to the ideal) and so to destroy the legend. The legend could be destroyed if we all wished it to go; but we do not wish it to go because it would affect the exquisite illusions of courtship and reduce the most intimate social relation to the dust and ashes of a scientific text-book. That is the reason the legendary woman lives secure in the hearts of our egomaniacs. Without her they would die for lack of spiritual nourishment. No wonder they fight hard to preserve the pathetic illusion. No wonder their hearts are veiled and secret. Given brains by an unkind providence, women must, for the sake of their all-powerful instinct, use those brains to one end alone. Hence their dualism: hence the mingled contempt and admiration with which they are regarded by the majority of men.

iv

I have said in the previous section that girls are always forced inwards upon the so-called mysteries of their sex, and that all their thoughts are the result of hearsay and introspection. I believe this to be one of the encouragements given to hysteria in women because it provides them with an inescapable preoccupation, or obsession. The feminine obsession is sex. In spite of what a recent writer has said about the part which sex plays in the lives of men, I must be allowed to record the belief that sex is not a male obsession and that it is casual and periodical in its demands upon a man's attention. This is not to say that sex is anything but the principal power in men's lives. I believe it to be the principal power. One knows, of course, that there are men whose idea of life is defined by the notion of unlimited sexual indulgence. To normal men, however, these living exponents of pornography are extraordinarily unpleasant. My work has brought me into rather intimate contact with many men, of all grades of life, and of all varieties of character. I will not pretend

to expect that they reveal the whole truth about their sexual lives. I have myself never done such a thing. But I have talked with these men in all sorts of moods, have received all sorts of confidences; and I can assert that our talk has never revealed the kind of men that one reads about in suffrage newspapers, and that while they have been apparently frank about their own sins, they have invariably shunned the man whose talk is merely sensual. One and all, they have avoided his company. I avoid his company myself. I therefore suggest that as I have known many of these men intimately, been constantly with them at all times and in all moods, received many confessions, and ranged the gamut of possible topics in conversation with them, it is untrue to say that sex is a constant preoccupation with men. It is untrue to say—as the writer referred to above has done—that it composes nine-tenths of their lives. They have many interests.

With women the case is different. Their interests are fewer. In fact I do not believe they have any at all. It is still very true that most women desire marriage as an end and as a con-

summation in their lives. They are still required by convention, and often by inclination, to play with dolls in their earliest years. They are still extremely fascinated by babies. They still desire babies of their own. The desire leads to curiosities, to reflections. It leads to a curious concealed mental life. Now a German writer has divided women into two distinct types: they are, he says, the mother and the courtesan. The mother is one who seeks to satisfy her wish for children; the courtesan is one who seeks only the gratification of her sexual impulses. These are often very obscure in action (I no longer quote the German writer, nor do I wholly accept his interesting generalization), for they take many different forms. It is known that male children betray sexual emotion at a very early age. Great details have been given of these manifestations. Less, however, is known of the early sexual instincts of women. Most writers assume that women are physically unconscious of sex hunger until love has awakened the wish for intimate communion with the beloved. It is said that many wives remain unawakened during the whole of their lives. That may quite well be

so. The Uranian is as much a monstrosity among women as among men; the nymphomaniac is a woman in the grip of morbid disease. But while the physical desire for sexual union may be in abeyance, the mental preoccupation, however shrouded, however unconscious, may still be (as I believe it is) very constant. Prudery in young women arises from evil and concealed knowledge. Self-consciousness in face of peculiar topics is due to discomfort arising from such concealed knowledge. Laughter in music-halls is loudest from women in response to jokes that are purely sexual in character, even though the allusions may be recondite. One bookseller in the West-end of London once said of an obscure, and I believe undesirable, book about an immoral nun: "We call that the ladies' bible, because so many young girls come in to order it." Prurient novels are mostly written by women, as they are read by women. Publishers tell me that of all the manuscripts submitted to them which are unpublishable by reason of their pruriency fully nine-tenths are the work of unmarried women who use pseudonyms, either male or female.

I take especial notice of this last point because it is the fact that such books are written, for the most part, as the expression of a powerful and unappeased instinct. They are not few. They are accordingly not negligible. They do suggest that what I have said above is true. They lead me to another suggestion. It is commonly believed, and facts are at my command which support such an assumption, that men who engage in the production of creative works are men of stronger sexual impulses than the majority of their fellows. Authors and artists, let us say, are believed to be immoral fellows. They are supposed to be promiscuous. It is perhaps true that for the production of emotional works (and if art is without emotion it is dead and quickly buried) such men require more emotional stimulus than they would otherwise need. Being more sensitive they are also more quickly responsive. Inclination is in them quickly roused, urgent, passionately and rapidly slaked. Their amours are frequently brief, but they are, briefly, frequent. It has been computed by one who observes these matters that the extreme duration of an "affair" is two years. This is the

limit. Many of them are much shorter. In the literary and artistic world the number of "affairs" of which one hears the naïvely simple details is considerable. Owing to the code of that society these things are conducted openly, and are not concealed, because they cannot be concealed.

Now, among all the arts to which women since Aphra Behn have turned as if by right, since it is the art which they (as well as men) can practise without tedious preliminary routine, the art of novel-writing is the most popular. It is a remarkable fact that women's novels in general are more often mediocre than acquaintance with the authors would lead one to suppose. When they write, women seem to betray an immaturity which their talk does not indicate. I suggest that the cause of this lies in the introspective character of women in their formative years, in the lack of practical experience, and in the largely derivative nature of women's opinions and knowledges. I do not wish to speak, in this connection, of the kind of novel-writing that produces earthly rewards, or even of the writing of prurient novels, published and unpublished. The

kind of novel I refer to is that written since the days of Miss Burney—in which the author seeks to create a world like unto that in which she herself moves, with a leading feminine character who shall be a glorified version of the author's self. A heroine, in a word, who is a sort of human embodiment of the legendary woman. She is flavoured to taste, of course, and is the victim of the carnal desires of men; but it is the fact that in practically all the novels of women (I except, of course, those of George Eliot, which are not novels at all, but imaginary compilations) the dominant interest has been one of sex. I will go further, and point out that the majority of feminine novels of any individuality have been the work of unmarried women. Nobody cares for the married works of Madame d'Arblay or Charlotte Bronte. Marriage has meant in many cases the extinction of the habit of novel-writing. It is possible that the assumption of household responsibilities explains this falling away; but a passionate natural need is not easily destroyed, even in a new situation. Once a born writer always a writer. I suggest, however, that with women all effort at creative work is sex-

ual in origin. I think the actual writing, the first direct occasion of literary or artistic work, is often due to emotional frustration, to some failure in the normal road to happiness; but the impulse lies below that. Often it is precocious. In women writers sex is also often extremely precocious. Sex, repressed, produces strange flowers. It produces various kinds of vice; it produces hysteria; it produces, I think, as a painful relief to emotional faculties overcharged with feeling and with pain, the serious and pathologically-instructive article, which we call the "woman's novel." Novel-writing, among women, is thus a form of hysteria.

V

That inexperience of practical life to which I have referred is a severe handicap to women, even in their personal affairs. It makes them alternately over-confident and over-timid. Be the friend of any woman who impresses superficial observers (I include under that head women who summarily observe and attribute infallibility to their insights) as self-assured; and you will almost always find below this assurance

a secret and often charmingly-betrayed shyness and timidity. Reserve, such as young girls are taught to cultivate on sexual matters, and which the best of them retain in all personal affairs whatever, leads them to leave questions unasked, to pretend to knowledges which they lack (in the hope of picking them up, so to speak, as the game proceeds), and to leave their judgments immature. Thus we find so much tendency to imitation among women. By seeming to behave like others one is using a protective colouring. I have heard innocent girls laugh at jokes they did not understand simply for fear of seeming ignorant or unsophisticated, while sophisticated girls elaborately pretended not to understand these same jokes for fear of being thought "not nice." So this undeveloped knowledge of life is a hindrance. It leads to a thousand sensitivenesses, to tears, to nights of untellable pain. Women have to obtain their knowledge in secret, by subterfuge, by guessing (what is called "feminine intuition"). It makes them mentally very unequal. They show strange maturity here, woeful lack of development there. This is the case with even intelligent women, who in any

extended discussion, in which values are seriously challenged, are driven in upon their usual sex devices of silence and mystic airs of dim understandings. It also makes their responses both to ideas and to actual facts very uncertain. It makes them curiously unhappy, suspicious, jealous. It gives them a sense of inferiority. Jealousy arises from the sense of inferiority. Jealousy arises when the ego does not send its reserves quickly enough to the temporary demoralized front line defences. Just as ill-breeding comes from a sense of inferiority (though here the legendary woman is not invoked, but only an angry, blustering "I'm as good as she is . . . any day!"), so does jealousy spring up from a sense of being at a disadvantage. That is when legend, being a woman, leaves her adorer in the lurch. Legend, as it were, has a puncture.

Very obscure indeed is the sort of vicarious jealousy that women display. A girl cannot know a young man of approximately her own emotional age without adopting an attitude of responsibility towards him. She may have no expectation of marrying him, may have not the least intention of marrying him. But she will

most tremendously care about the other girls he knows. She will be jealous of them. She may even warn him against them, of course solely in his own interest, and because a woman's instinct is more sure than a man's, etc. She is not in love: she is jealous. I have over and over again observed the process of the feeling. I have seen the faces of girls watching a young man flirt with another girl. Hostility, dread, anger—all these feelings have been displayed behind smiles. I have heard new urgent notes come into a girl's voice as she demanded information about some other girl whose acquaintance a man had just made, about another woman whom he had long known. Not love was there, but jealousy. The questions were not those of interest: they were startlingly forced from a suddenly-shocked heart. It would almost seem from this that women, for some reason, dread the loss of any one of their male friends. It is a vicarious jealousy; but it perhaps has its root in the knowledge that as a rule a man married is a man cut off from other woman friends. Women extraordinarily distrust other women; they deliberately manœuvre to bring about en-

tanglements between men and women, and between other women; and they are oppressed by a feeling of the helplessness of men in face of unbridled and unscrupulous advances from these other, and peculiarly "not nice," women. They are perhaps so instinctively aware of the vagaries of sex as to find their thoughts running sharply to a succession of ideas that have as yet no reality. They are apprehensive, meticulous in all relations concerning members of the other sex. The explanation may be that women live in a world of illusion, and that any shock from the world of outside experience brings extraordinary agitation into their systems. They have no grasp of general ideas: the egomaniac's reactions are always personal, and she naturally assumes similar processes in others. As their unhappiness, their delights, their dreams, are all vague and torturing, so a sudden new fact or factor is like a pebble thrown into this unsubstantial fabric, tearing it. It is like an affront to the legendary woman. The possibility that a man may look otherwhither for his confidante, his friend, his beloved, pierces deep into that painful humility that women betray when they no longer guard

their hearts. The legendary woman is felt to be in peril. There flashes into a woman's mind the always woundingly concealed suspicion that her idol has no power over other mortals, but only over herself. From a Queen, the legendary woman becomes a child. If the first instant of jealousy, of dread, be fulfilled, the idol becomes a dead baby. Gone is the apparent firmness, the determination, the clear-sighted criticism of which adoring lovers and husbands boast to their unmarried friends. Women, without acknowledged rights in a man, and authority over his way of life and his clothes and his heart, are still defenceless. They will always, in the long run, be reducible to tears.

III WHY MEN LOVE WOMEN

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i

Before coming to the true subject of this chapter, in which I want to give some of the reasons for men's love, it may be amusing to indicate one or two minor points. In the first place the real reason for love on the part of the male is that he responds emotionally to a belief that some one or other of his women acquaintances is in love with him, or at least is not so indifferent as to put out of court the notion that she might be willing to marry him. I know that this is not the first stage, nor even the first crystallization, proposed by Stendhal, whose extraordinary book *de l'Amour* is packed with subtle and suggestive things. To Stendhal the first steps are those of admiration, the desire to kiss the beloved, hope. There follows embroidery upon the lady's perfections. In a rough sense it is true that admiration is the key to love; but one may admire, and wish to kiss, without loving. In fact one does

frequently kiss without loving. Some men never love in a true sense; though they may hanker. Many marriages are achieved by sheer feminine determination, or by mere usage. Marriage is a habit. But when one reaches the stage of hope it is because there has been some curious and indefinable turn upon the part of the woman which renders not wholly absurd the notion that she has an inclination to love. If to admire were to love, we should love more frequently than we are supposed to do. It is true that most men, in a superficial sense, love often; that is to say, they are easily attracted by prettiness and grace; and the more candid among them will admit, as Mr. Galsworthy points out of one of his heroes, that they were always more or less in love. They are capable of being superficially in love with almost any pretty girl. It is only when that superficial attraction becomes deep enough to come in contact with the critical faculty that any turmoil begins. And the critical faculty is aroused by some responsive attraction on the part of the woman. There follows a quick reaction. It is almost like a panic. "Do I want this to go any farther?" asks the man. "Is it good enough?"

According, then, to the determination of the woman, the next step is reached. Initiative lies with her. But if she presses, the male almost certainly shies, unless he is very callow. The combat then most interestingly begins.

As a rule, I should say that the pretty girl can marry almost any man who strongly attracts her. The game, if she be astute enough (I do not suggest any design), is in her hands. Mr. Shaw wrote somewhere once that every time a girl sees a man she is "encouraging" him. That, like so many of Mr. Shaw's views, is a little Victorian; but it is not altogether false. Assuming it to be true, as I have said above, that a pretty girl may choose at will among her male acquaintances, it will be obvious that she must show a preference for some over others. A girl who is discreetly impartial has no suitors. A girl with brains and a tongue has only brave ones. Directly the girl shows a disinclination for the society of one man he retires (unless he is very thick-skinned, in which case, presumably, he deserves the snub direct). As soon as she favours one above the others she is directly encouraging him to think that her feeling for him is peculiar. It is then

that he hopes; it is then that her standing is in the balance. If she be too clearly encouraging she is a minx, since the word "minx" implies design. If she has no object but pleasure, she becomes a coquette. It is hard; but in our self-conscious species there is no alternative. No girl not lost to decorum, not emancipated from the rule of opinion, can be seen very often with a tolerably juvenile man without having it assumed that she is willing to encourage him in hopes of marrying her, or that she is desirous that such an inclination should be created. Often a good girl, with a naturally frank temperament, will bring great pain to herself and her friend by a too definite partiality for his society. An engagement will be made for her in a twinkling, and the fat will be in the fire. The engagement may then, through pressure, be ratified as genuine; the constant association may cease (to some shaking of heads); or, defying propriety, the girl may so act as to retain her freedom at the loss of her pristine reputation. In the former case the man has received confirmation of his belief that she loves him; in the second case he feels injured, and perhaps becomes expostulatory and even

rather angry at having been duped—thereby doing great injustice to the girl, but not to her sex, since she is exceptional; in the third case he is either very much in love and still hopes that the continued relation is a mark of hesitation, or he deceives himself into the belief that he is not in love with her and that he is going to have a good time in her society. In the third case the acquaintance cannot long continue. One of the parties may wish it to do so; but jealousy intervenes. No association between two members of the opposite sex can long subsist without something approaching love arising upon one side or the other. Platonic friendships involve restraint upon amorous inclination on the part of one of the friends. Therefore continued objectless acquaintance sooner or later produces quarrels, estrangements, unhappiness. Human beings, it would seem, are so constituted that they must believe themselves subtly first in the eyes of their most desired intimates. Any man or woman who, having an intimate relation of this kind, turns to a third party for extended company, at once breaks the earlier relation. It may feebly persist for a time; but gradually it

wastes, and is as though it had never been. The lover withdraws love, ashamed, humiliated; turns yet again, and is caught up into new interests, new society. Old associations no longer count. The quondam friends, once so confiding, are strangers. Memories fade. The episode is finished.

ii

The situation I have described is something different from an "affair." It is a situation in which there has been kept up at any rate an appearance of camaraderie without caress. The "affair," which may range through all varieties of emotional excess, is otherwise. It may arise when there is proclaimed love upon both sides, without, however, the determination for marriage. It may arise when marriage is out of the question, or when marriage is for a time intended. There may be love upon one side and half-love upon the other. It may culminate in social flight or in a very extreme flirtation in which neither party intends permanence. Eventually it concludes in a quarrel or in a gradual estrangement. It has been a passing love, with-

out roots; but with the various inclinations of love gratified to a point finally at the discretion of the woman. A married woman probably carries an affair farther than an unmarried woman, who has her whole future to consider. Consequently affairs with unmarried women subside more normally than those with married women. The married woman, having endured a disappointment, having had distaste aroused, and having had developed within her a desire for revenge upon the cause of her disappointment, becomes more quickly reckless. She counts the cost less; she knows as nobody else can do the sweets of stolen intercourse. The unmarried woman has more prudence. She withholds her sacrifice longer, and often makes no sacrifice. Life is before her. To the married woman life is already half passed. She has taken her plunge. One affair finished, her appetite must be appeased. Insensibly she skids a little. There is very nearly always time for an unmarried woman who is not at heart a courtesan to recover her ground. At the worst she can convert the affair into a marriage. At the best she can withdraw flying all her colours, a little bat-

tered by the excitement, but still in excellent condition to reflect upon the chances of life and of matrimony.

iii

Some men like "affairs" because they are stimulated by them; but most men have a hankering for marriage. For one thing, a girl of affairs is too experienced; she knows too much, or cannot altogether manage to appear as though she did not know too much. She conveys the impression that she is soiled. It may be that she is not soiled at all, but only made wise. Nevertheless, to the ordinary man, whose notions of the woman he marries are taken from novelettes and from her own revelations of the legendary self, there is something excessively good in marrying somebody who has never—it would almost seem—loved before. He feels her innocence to be a guarantee of future good conduct. He feels safe. She will be there, for ever his, innocent, wise, good; the beautiful safeguard for his own continence. Other women are—well, other women. His wife, like his mother, will be "different." She will carry on the good tradition.

It is perhaps natural that he should gloss over his own curiosities, his own affairs, his own rather tougher and case-hardened nature. His wife at least will be pure, the inspiration of his days, etc. Men like something stable. They wish to feel that love and company await them through life. So only the gay dog and the cynic and the unfortunate lover cherish the single life. These men are but half men. They are chaffed, remonstrated with, by their married friends. They are told that they ought to get married; that by remaining single they are missing the greatest joys of life. The married man, for some reason, is an enthusiast for the marriage of others. In such wise also does the trapped bird act as the decoy, it is said. The truth being that the happily-married man exults in a condition for which his heart has all his life secretly yearned. He has found safe harbourage. The thrills and excitements of all the enthralling possibilities behind a smile or a frown, a glance or an averted head, have been too unsettling for him. One may love and love again; but in the end love that seems to be final in its unbreakable shackles of matrimony offers him the sort of

resources that led women of old to take the veil. Not that he renounces all the pleasures of love. They are assured to him. Only that he flies the temptations of the bewildering devils who abound in the path of the unmarried young man. There comes a time in the life of man when he can no longer endure amorous uncertainty. The game has lost its first savour. He wants to be sure of one woman for ever. It is a dream.

iv

In early days, when puberty begins, the boy is physically very inquisitive. However much secret vice may prevail at this time, schoolboys in general are frankly physical. They talk and think a good deal of filth; but their concern is largely a curiosity about their own bodies, and has much to do with natural functions of other kinds as with the functions of sex. Sexual curiosity is developed rather later, and it takes crude forms—jests which are largely imitative and self-conscious, abortive wonderings about the sexual act, about birth, and so on. Only in association with these so mysterious creatures girls do boys

become morbidly sexual. There is so much they do not know; the possibilities of intelligent conversations with elder people are so few, and the relations with parents so muddled, that boys are driven to their thoughts and to common malpractices for relief. When they are older still they begin to find a quaint pleasure in the society of girls, and they often find the girls so self-possessed in all such matters that they are once more baffled and exasperated. The crudity of their own impressions, their own desires, is emphasized to a ridiculous degree. They are everywhere hampered and dissatisfied, unless they come upon girls of a lower order than themselves who have their own sexual instincts strongly developed. For the most part, however, the adolescent male, strictly physical in his interests, and not at all fitted for any of that subtle playing with fire which is the girl's principal concern, is helplessly stupid and ignorant. His thoughts are often busy enough, but they lack penetration and instruction. He is ready at the first touch to fall sentimentally in love with an older woman, to exalt her above everything he has known, as being infinitely beautiful and mys-

terious. This green-sickness endures for a little while, a strange bewilderment of heats and chills, of intolerably exaggerated devotions and wounds; and then it subsides as the bitter realization comes of the woman's greater personal interest in an older male. Duels, tragedies, violences of all kinds occupy the mind of the unhappy youth. He is displaced, is cured; and he proceeds for a time to be extremely cynical and juvenile about the sex. He is unpleasant at this age; but his devotion, however sentimental, has a pathetic strength in it, and he is left awkwardly fronting a world of sex in which he has already found himself discomfited. He may turn away from women for years, or, driven by imperious need or baulked curiosity, he may seek solace in the shudderings of bought embraces. That depends upon the point to which his amorous desire has been excited, upon his home training, upon his opportunities. Also it depends upon his associates, who dominate him at this time of life. Pique is strong, imitativeness is very strong among adolescent youth. Undergraduates, for example, are easily affected by the prevailing tone of their set. In any case, however, the

idealism of the young man generally divides women at this time into two classes. It is possible for a youth to be exactly what young Marlow was in the time of Goldsmith. Whatever his sexual experiences he is still extraordinarily nervous in the company of girls of his own class, whose apparently greater understanding of life disarms him and causes him to regard them with a callow heart, however much he may upon the surface show the bearing of a man of the world.

It is at this point that a young man is liable to be "got hold of" (as the vulgar saying of mothers has it) by a girl with determination greater than his own. If she be in his own class, the issue is probably simple. If she is a girl whose acquaintance is made by casual encounter in these sweepstakes called "monkeys' parades," the consequences may be various. An entanglement may arise, urged forward by pertinacity, by tears and threats, by subtle appropriation. The young man may find himself in a great difficulty, social and moral. He may be ruined for life. Or, at the price of self-respect, he may recover his liberty. Thereafter he may eschew the society of casual acquaintances of the

other sex, or he may again adventure, more warily, until he becomes an expert at the game. In that case his respect for women will go the way of other ideals, and he will conclude that every girl is to be had for the asking, or for the trouble of taking. He will become a man of paltry affairs, and, as the appetite grows by what it feeds on, he will become insatiable. He will become a rake, and his successes will be innumerable. That is because his taste will draw him naturally to girls of particular characteristics, who play the sex-game crudely and take their own jaunty risks with life. Success will make him intolerable, and he will degenerate. That is his lot in life.

The alternative is a kind of priggish severity which will not prevent the young man from envying the victor in so many amorous conquests. He will long for conquests of his own, but, letting I dare not wait upon I would, he will have to content himself with becoming the blind and elated victim of more refined tactics. He will pass through various loves, all the more or less reminiscent of green-sickness, but less acute, and equally the product of pleased vanity; and the girl who stoops to capture will ultimately enjoy

possession of his income and his person. He will idolize her for a time, and at length, rather puzzled at what the man in Mr. Granville Barker's play called "this damned subtle world," he will submit to the ruthless regimen of life, which binds us all about with the shackles of custom and half-hearted assumptions of happiness. He will believe himself to be happy, and he will actually enjoy certain curious moments of pride and happiness, because love and marriage, however dubious in their origins, are productive of all sorts of acute and precarious delights. All this is true only of a section; but it needs to be dwelt upon here because it is germane to our subject. It shows men to walk very foolishly in the paths of love, and it shows at least two types (both of them very common) to be extraordinarily inferior in sexual intelligence to their feminine counterparts.

v

The male, then, in his attitude to love, is more unsophisticated than the female. He is more sentimental. At any rate after the maturing of his sexual character, whatever his experience, he

is capable of saying in his own mind: "dear little thing," and "poor little darling," about a woman larger than himself. That is the extreme limit of sentimentality; for it shows him besotted. But pity is a very constant element in male love. It is the cause of many engagements, many marriages. Pity is aroused (as well as gratification) by the yearning eyes of a girl who has made up her mind to marry shortly. Unhappiness at home is in some classes of society a sure card to play, and is responsible for some strange weddings. "They don't understand me . . . mother's awful! I don't know *what* I shall do. I can't stand it much longer!" "Poor little girl," says the young man, his mind darting to possibilities. "Look here, we should be beastly poor, and all that; but . . . ." Stevenson was much puzzled to account for many of the marriages he saw in being at every turn. Is it such a puzzle? Even a good girl may sometimes hint, if her love be great, or her need desperate. Hints—the uncontrollable tone in a voice, the checked sentence, the accidental word;—and a train of strange thought is laid in the combustible mind of a young man. Can it be? Would she think of

me? Would she marry me? What an uncertainty it is! How hard to be sure; to conquer male self-love and take the plunge. Who has not seen marriages arranged, and the youth hopelessly ignorant of the plans for his future? How often, in the small towns, in the suburbs of larger towns, are marriages created by opinion! There are a few meetings, a little tennis, a hint or two, a confusion or so; and everything is done without fuss and without the least wound to modesty! In London we are perhaps different. In Chelsea and in Fitzroy Square, certainly, we take less heed of opinion. Elsewhere it is the great matchmaker. But I insist that initiative lies with the girl. It is for her to chill. Every smile she gives is a lure to the average man. How tame this loving seems when one has known the other, with its long weeks of butterfly alternations, of vacillation, of siege and flight, of vehement feeling. But it is the kind of love that populates these islands with obedient and steadfast citizens. The love that thrills is the love of the chase. It is inconstant, exhilarating, and full of divine cajolery. It is not married love; because our men wish in marriage for

something not quite so dazzlingly uncertain. It is the love of flirtations, of passions, of affairs, of fine sweeping dashes to the pinnacles of feeling. When we are married we chuckle half-timidly at such memories. We become coarse, as married men tend to become coarse, although they do not know it. The oddest little speeches and embraces and passionate instants lurk once again behind our current thoughts, warming hearts and narrowing eyes with secret joy. The recollections bring our coat-collars over our ears in dread. For the rest of that evening we are very attentive to our wives, very gentle and benign. We listen to their conversation. As the evening wears, that rare mystical expression comes into their eyes. They are communing with the legendary woman, who nowadays smells slightly of camphor. What things memories are, to the sentimental! To the unsentimental, what unbearable pain they bring!

vi

But the emotions that in after days evoke memories are very powerful. They are the deepest and truest emotions in our lives. Beside them

the steady pressure of friendship is a dead thing, the husk of loving, with the heart away. We may have many friends, we may have what is called a genius for friendship; but the aspiration that fills our hearts is for a beloved woman to ease our pain. It is not now of common men that I speak, for common men slip easily into marriage with a "suitable" girl, and we sometimes enviously observe engaged couples, dull and sober, walking rhythmically in the twilight, secure in a very week-day affection. There, we say: those people have their desire: why not I? That is in our abject moments of modesty, when we no longer sneer at humdrum contentment, but instead are dissatisfied with our own restlessness, our own fastidious disposition to choose the unattainable in life. In their hearts all men believe the woman-legend. Those least prone to believe it are the rather emotionally inexperienced, who have in youth had sisters, or who have had shocks from the sisters of their friends. The men of the world, who have a less fine sense of fastidiousness, and to whom all girls are dear little things and real pals and those other remarkable phenomena of the senti-

mental male mind, half-drunk with its own lees, believe to the last in the regenerative power of a good woman. They yearn for marriage, which is to effect a change of heart comparable to that which idealists await in our present enemies. Most of them are conscious, after marriage, of disappointment: all think before the event that their own marriage will be different, a perfect harmony. When married men betray (it is extraordinary how seldom they explicitly betray) their disappointment, unmarried men think to themselves: "Well, I wouldn't have married her myself." How do they know? How does anybody know the circumstances that led up to a marriage? Is there a more secret process in the world?

It is to be observed that all men of character —even those who are supposed to be self-sufficing—are extremely lonely. They live remote. They are not gregarious, as are common men; and even if they have many friends they remain secret, conveying little of their sighing wish for any *dénouement* which shall free them from the load of memory, of sense of personal responsibility. They are lonely and tired. Their

thought is that if a true woman gave her love, they, her humble adorer, would be able to find blessed peace. It is with them the longing to be once again children. When Sir James Barrie pretends that what every woman knows is that men are children he is cleverly and sophistically turning the glove inside out. He is giving women a straight tip. He is betraying a male secret, not exalting a feminine knowledge. He is flattering women, and appealing to their vanity. No wonder Sir James Barrie is the favourite playwright among women. He tells them what pleases; but the fact is not there. The fact lies in the weary desire for rest. Rest, that promise in so many hymns of the Eternal Father, is what men most desire. Memory goes back to days of mother and the soft breast upon which as children they could always recover their courage and good heart. That is the first longing of men. That is what prepares them to love. The rest is auxiliary.

Apart from very exceptional men, the sexual instinct can be appeased without love. In ordinary courtship the sexual appeal obviously counts for a good deal; because, as Mr. Shaw says,

most people have nothing to give in marriage but the sexual relation. They have, that is to say, no spiritual communion. With the best types of men, however, the sex relation is secondary to the relation of the spirit. They ride for ever seeking—not God, as the poem says, but understanding and sympathy. With other men, with the world as a whole, they are content to show their success, their endeavour, their activity. Their ideal is a woman to whom they may express their failure. The desire to serve, which is very strong in the hearts of all good men, comes from humility and from pride in the beloved. I do not now speak of that masculine trampling of other men which forms daily life. We can all fight, if we are called to do so. But, to women, men who crave for reality have this odd and passionate desire to appear no otherwise than as penitents. We relinquish, in the strength of our love, the gesture of normal behaviour. Failure, all that dreadful treasure of disappointment that we store in our hearts, squeezed though it may be from ostensible triumph, is the thing we go back to in memory. The things we

have longed for and have never got. Those things we long to confess. To rest and to confess, to be made whole and to be comforted. To be understood! To have a wife who, knowing all our weakness, has yet the strength to love us and to be proud of our love. The technique of love-making does not attract men of integrity. It seems to them to be waste of time. What they think they need are the objects I have detailed above. These are the love aspirations of men. They are rarely more than aspirations, because women also require comforting; and when women appeal to men for comforting the breakfast must have been intolerably bad, or the day quite too distressingly exacting, if during the first year of married life male sympathy is not forthcoming. Afterwards, no doubt, with puzzled disappointment upon both sides drying up the wells of tenderness and longing, both are harsh. Neither then, perhaps, struggles to adjust the differing rhythms of mood. But at first, when the flush of rapture is still warm, only inarticulateness, only cowardice, can account for the failure of unity

in mood. There is no peace, because men and women alike are egoists when they are in emotional conflict.

vii

Having spoken of lawful love, I must mention that experimental love has other fascinations. Coquetry is not a specifically feminine accomplishment; though in a girl it is more charming and in a man holds more coldness of heart. A girl coquette may be a rogue: a male coquet is almost certainly a selfish fellow with a sense of his own value. There is great attraction in the girl coquette if she is fresh: her movements beguile the eyes; her little gleaming darts of intelligence please the flushed and excited mind: her mystifications intrigue and delight the imagination. That is one kind of love, no doubt, and it is a kind that gives light pleasure and light pain (though the pain has its daggerlike strokes to the heart). Another kind arises when the girl is of a more sensual type than the man, as often happens. It is then she who has set the pace, she who instructs her lover in the art of loving. Her arms entangle him; he

is lost, breathless, hot and exhilarated. He is taken quite out of his ordinary self, seduced by the constant temptations that are revealed to him. So stifling a love, which is the rousing of lust rather than a sweeter affection, cannot last. The man is a mere instrument to such a woman. She can hold him for a year, for two years; but in the end his feeling is one of aversion. He is done with her. The instinctive courtesan, she has played hard, perhaps, for happiness; but she has known only one way of winning love, and it is not the true way. It is not first of all through the senses that man loves—if he is capable of loving. It is through quite other faculties. It is through imagination, and humour, and pity, and admiration. His love is made when he forms a smiling or engrossing picture of the girl's nature; when, though he may be terrified out of his life, he feels that he would risk anything for the possession of the beloved; when he feels at once a schoolboy and an old man. See the exchanged glance of true lovers—what is there? On the girl's side a glance for reassurance, quick, sidelong; on the man's side a puzzled, questioning scrutiny.

What is she? he is asking. And he is suddenly, vehemently realizing, behind his *sang froid,* just exactly how frightened of her he is. He will never stop being afraid, because she is physically weaker than himself. If she were not by this fact placed absolutely outside his combative range we should hear less of the mysteriousness of women. The mysteriousness would vanish. As long as women are physically the inferior sex they will be compelled to be mysterious. Their determination may be (it so often is, that I would almost venture to class determination as a feminine characteristic) much stronger than that of men. It is certainly more unquiet and assertive. But it can only be combated by physical force; and physical force is the one weapon which most men will never apply to their wives. So this young man who is in deadly fear of his sweetheart—a fear that he cannot define, because it defies definition—is typical of his sex. He is afraid, for she is a stranger to him, as he is to her—as they both will be strangers to each other for the rest of their lives, striving vainly after knowledge until

the day comes when the pursuit will cease to interest.

I wonder what the girl is thinking all this time. She does not know what her lover thinks of her. If he is wise he will never attempt to tell.

viii

He will never attempt to tell if he is wise, because he will make a mess of it. He does not always know what he thinks. But the extraordinary thing is that he knows as much about his beloved as she knows about him. He is deeply in love—let us say; he is full of terror, of admiration, of all the things proper to be mentioned by sentimentalists. And in between his admiration and terror his judgment is unceasing. Thousands of tiny memories are there like the finest strands of a spider's web, delicate, imponderable, trembling out the signals of a telegraphic code to the brain. He is remembering every circumstance connected with old meetings, old talks; a laugh, a sudden bewitching charm, a sullenness. He is thinking

of his first recoil at a hardness in her voice, and his passionate joy at so many other tones. Gestures, phrases, contacts with her hair or her lips, delicious pleasures of unexpressed thought, of understanding without speech. These are in his memory, firm and sure and exquisite. The web is weaving, and the pride in her is strong. And all the time, without treachery or disloyalty, without wavering in his love and his steadfastness, the lover, admiring, amused, bewitched, and afraid, is baffling the world by his expression. He stands regarding the woman he loves, and loving her profoundly. And all the time he is consciously, and unflinchingly, seeing through her; seeing the vanities upon which her tender breast feeds her fears of him, her angers with him, her discomforts and triumphs, cajoleries and inexpressible reliefs. He is seeing her a child and a woman, a coward and a heroine, a human heart that lives in a world of illusion. And he is not cynical, but only a man watching his beloved. How strange! But he must never tell. Women are far too serious to endure the true picture. They have too much that is "heroic" in their temperament.

To see life and character clear, and to laugh without cruelty or pain, is a power denied to all but two or three women. If it were a widespread gift we should all laugh ourselves into apoplexies.

IV WOMEN IN LOVE

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i

In the superficial account given in the last chapter of the attitude of men to love and to the women whom they love, I have intentionally avoided dwelling upon the subtleties of emotional reaction. These are very great, and they are still inexplicable. The alternate attractions and repulsions to and from the beloved are more strongly felt by men than by women, because male concepts are clearer and more importunate than those of women. With women the recognition of love is a sort of penultimate stage; because to them the consummation of love is the great moment of their lives—the dividing line, if they could but know it consciously, between growth and endurance of that fate which is character. To men marriage is an incident; confession of love the beginning of doubt. By confession I do not mean avowal to the beloved, although avowal is often succeeded

in highly sensitive men by an active aversion, a sense almost approaching the paroxysm of the claustrophobe. The first reaction occurs at the moment of recognition, because for most men this recognition implies a perception of weakness in their will. It is associated in the minds of men with submission to a stronger force. They are then (often blindly) aware of the finesse and dissimulation of the beloved. Hatred, that near neighbour of love, is born. The eternal struggle begins between these two emotions. If the feeling is one of fascination, the struggle may be brief. Denied opportunity for the *coup de grâce*, the woman may lose her victory, because fascination, involving passionate attachment, consumes like fire. Presently, the stronger the fascination the sooner the consumption, love so violently aroused subsides. Its place is taken by indifference or by aversion. It will be remembered that when, in "A Nest of Gentlefolk," Lavretsky's wife perceives aversion in her husband she knows the battle to be lost. It is then that the second or alternative woman so often achieves her gain. No phrase is better understood in relation to marriage than

that which says a man has been "caught on the rebound." Here there may be likeness or significant unlikeness between the two women. It is immaterial at the moment; but the fact is familiar, and need not be laboured.

Assuming passion to be aroused in a less degree, the woman, whether she be as expert as Madame Lavretsky or a mere instinctive craftsmen, has still to work very dexterously in order to complete her conquest. She is hardly ever unconscious of the situation, for her acuteness in this one great knowledge of her life is unquestioned. Almost always the man, conscious throughout of defects, incompatibilities, sometimes even (in himself) of horrors, is torn between distaste and desire. John Tanner, when he calls Ann Whitefield a vampire and a hypocrite, is not so grotesque as sentimentalists like to believe. He feels himself in the trap of destiny. Men will go—driven by an imperious need which they cannot deny—within a hundred yards of the beloved's dwelling, and will recoil, horror-laden. They will vehemently decline to have anything more to do with the woman who has entangled them. She becomes, not a syren,

but a creature wholly base, whose defects are more clearly seen in this moment succeeding intoxication than at any time before marriage. They will fly coolly and frantically (for in love there is a kind of frenetic coolness) determined to have nothing further to do with the woman for whom so recently they have been ready to dare all. The mood persists, but is shaken by another mood spent in contrasting the newly synthesized basenesses with the irresistibly recalled and adorable qualities of the loved woman. The cruelty of perception, the desperate yearning of love, form a conflict incalculable in the breasts of these men. It is feeling against thought, knowledge against overmastering impulse. A hundred times a day, excitedly weighing this and that—a harsh tone, an unsuspectingly-revealed callousness, an uncontrolled insensitiveness—against the fever that possesses them, men waver like reeds in a storm. They are without will, without resource. This is the first paroxysm. It is renewed, more profoundly, but with new variations and with a kind of despondent fatalism, when the rubicon has been crossed. Very young men often cry off on

the day following a proposal and acceptance. Mothers understand this. Women understand it. Rarely does the shuddering attempt at eleventh hour escape succeed. The girl's vanity is involved. One may read the history of the succeeding struggle in many actions for breach-of-promise; but these actions are confined almost to one class, they are often begun from a sort of vengeful jealousy months after the event, because the young man has betrayed another inclination (it may be that the plaintiff has until that hour disbelieved in her failure), and most jilted girls take other measures. They either remain silent through pride, or they content themselves with vilification and frequently with insinuations against the young man's physical state, or they more expertly attain their original object and hold the recalcitrant lovers to their word. Nevertheless, the recoil is a psychological factor to be reckoned with. It is very common, even in its crude attempt at evasion (as indicated above). The secret revulsion, I should say, is practically universal, except in the physically very robust, who take life as it comes.

This sense of women as tricksters is deep-

seated. Few men trust women. In spite of all sentimental talk with a contrary trend, distrust of or a contempt for all women is more common than genuine love for one woman. She is felt to be professional in this particular incident of life. That is because she has made marriage, or at least the sexual act, her lifelong preoccupation. She has thought of it since she could think at all, and her instinct is stronger even than her preoccupation. To a woman the sense of avowed love is a triumph. To a man, whatever his momentary elation, which is excitement and not deep-seated joy, it is a moment of dread and anxiety, a moment of unsettlement—almost of demoralization.

ii

I have stated the proposition in a crude form which may make it appear grotesque. It is difficult to avoid this appearance, because so many of the incidents peculiar to what is called "mating" have a sort of grotesqueness when they are divorced from the glamour with which each individual case is surrounded by the protagonists. There are men who will deny the reaction:

most women would deny it. This strange complexity, however, is really inseparable from the love relation—the mixture of hostility and reverence. I have known lovers who hated one another. Brutality between married people will possibly be recalled by many of my readers, a palpable hatred which does not stop short of physical violence. The impulse to cruelty towards the beloved is common. In women it often takes the form of a frigidity that is expressively known as "sulking." In men, so much greater is the complex of emotion, it may become tyranny, or fear, or a kind of snarling meanness that is compounded of those two. A story is told of a man of exceptional strength of character and firmness of will who—in an unwonted burst of candour—said to his wife: "The power you have over me is extraordinary. I am afraid of you." Not all of us are capable of such candour. We hide our fear beneath a temporizing kindness and nonsensical condescension. The fear is genuine: it is without immediate cause, but lies deep in sexual hostility and a knowledge that in love women are the masters.

They ought to be the masters: they are the specialists. They have become involved in the web of sex while men are still juvenile and still preoccupied with the outcome of school games, with the stuff they have been learning, with that cubbish disdain which is in reality a self-consciousness born of inexperience and fear. When it is said that men cannot understand women it is really meant that they are impregnated by a sense of feminine unscrupulousness and the kind of emotion which President Wilson described once as being "too proud to fight." Once in a web they have no power to fight: they may try to fly, as one does in a dream, with legs which are curiously leaden and trembling. In vain does the impulse arise. The forbidden danger is too alluring.

What, then, is the real attitude of women to this extraordinary behest of nature? Are they, too, afraid? Do they, too, approach the danger with dread and fascination? Few of them. When a girl is uncertain—as may happen in the case of two persons of strong personality who see beyond propinquity into the void of the future—we say, perhaps, that her sexual in-

stinct is at variance with her judgment. We doubt her judgment, and we think of her instinct as representing the essential woman. Her brain has been snared with admiration of some quality in the man; but we know she will not love unless her instinct finally approves. She belongs to a higher type of woman, or she has suffered painful experience. Her nature is less simple in its manifestations than is that of the majority of her sex. Upon her choice hangs the possibility of disaster. Most women have no such qualms. They have made up their minds earlier. With them, hesitancy is not prolonged to the point of possible loss: it is a sportive part of the sex game, to provoke love-making more ardent. It is a delightful experience for a woman to believe herself loved. It is the moment for which she has waited all her life.

iii

From early days she has planned to be loved and mated. Only a few—and these exceptional —are denied this professional impulse. For them the issue is clear from the outset, quite

primitively seen. To be convinced of the general truth of this, one has only to observe the novels they most admire. They are novels of feminine surrender. They are novels in which the heroine at last succumbs to the urgent wooing of the hero, or to the desires of her own physical nature. Many girls have luxuriated in the first volume of Richardson's *Pamela*, than which there is probably no more exciting pursuit of virginity. In the eighteenth century this was a woman's book (while Fielding's masculine contrast, *Joseph Andrews*, was not so clearly a woman's book, by reason of its humanity and laughter): it still remains a woman's book. Among modern novels it is the erotic tale that finds most readers among women. I will go so far as to assert that any novel which contains a marriage at first left unconsummated, with the ugly intrigues of the wife to indicate her willingness for cohabitation forming its subsequent *motif*, is infallibly a success with women. Their savage curiosity in following the theme is unmistakable. It is an index to their predilections. They have one thought only; and in pursuit of that will endure a perfect tedium of de-

tails and doublings until the desired end is reached. It is almost a recipe for successful novel-writing. A study of marriage which does not dwell upon the physical relation is to them intolerable.

The maturity of girls in the very earliest episodes is remarkable. One has only to watch them with schoolboys, all very self-conscious, all very sentimental. One sees the youths trying to look as though they enjoyed the experience, as boys look when the first pangs of cigarette-sickness are approaching; but one sees that the directing intelligence is that of the girls. They are taking a prim and enjoying interest in every thrilling danger. It is the girls who lie most readily to their parents. The boys may stammer; the girls are assured. The more experience they can gain of this kind of flirtation the more expert they will be in the real life that is opening to them. A boy of fourteen is a tyro; the girl of the same age is an adept. She will manage to enchain, if she is pretty and confident, several cavaliers. They will think themselves terrible fellows in their attempts to secure solitary interviews. The game is always

the same. It is painfully crude to the observer; but the girl's address is unfailing. She has the matter in hand. Already she is practising her skill. Only when she is sure of herself, of her power to deal singly with these croaking youths, will she abandon the group contest. The group has given her the sense of strength. Thereafter the single lover best serves her turn and the legendary girl springs like a slender shoot within her consciousness. From that moment she is a woman. She has a tale to tell, a myth to incubate.

The woman's first thought about a man of whom she has hopes—not yet as a husband, but as a cavalier—is the degree of his consideration among other women. She has no standards of her own; but if he pleases, or is desired by, others of her sex, his value in her eyes is increased. It becomes worth while to exert her efforts to keep him by her side. She will immediately be capable of jealousy upon his account. If she is too mature in instinct, without the charming wisdom that plays with experiment and develops very dangerous allure, she will proceed, as the phrase is, to "take possession"

of him. That is to say, she will allow her jealousy to be seen. Stolidly, perhaps, she will press his inclination until her too warm clasp is perceptible. The male reaction will occur. He will detach, uncomfortably, with a shamefaced desire to escape. He may even feel a sudden burst of self-confidence in his power to please the sex. She has been stupid. This drives her to other youths, until at last she attains proficiency in her art. The more accomplished craftswoman will not "take possession." Secure in her prettiness, or perhaps smarting under the sense of unjustifiable rivalry upon the part of another girl, she will seem to turn away; she will play the coquette; her heart will chill. She will find how easy it is to make the male tongue stumble by means of a light touch with her delicate finger or the smallest approach of her tender cheek. It will delight her as nothing else could do. If she is wise she will remain unspoiled; but she will secretly despise the side of youths which can make them such easy material for experiment. The impulse to experiment, once born, is hard to eradicate. It becomes so strong that it often renders

a young and pretty girl unstable and self-willed. Power being tasted too early, she will find herself doing everything too easily. Effort will be untempting to her. Failing great character she may become a mere flirt, the cause of chagrins and angers, the cause of happiness to nobody at all. The stupid girl has the better chance of making and providing happiness. The flirt, spoilt by early success, tends to be a butterfly; and life is too hard for her, so that she becomes discontented or makes discontent for all who cross her path. The stupid girl, if she rid herself of the possessive instinct, may attain happy marriage, and through marriage her desire. The flirt may remain unmarried, or she may succumb in sudden temptation to the first rake who keeps her dangling. After all, there are male flirts; and the male flirt plays the game with even greater heartlessness than his female equivalent. She, in the last resort, may be a moth; but he may be a monster, because he will have a clearer head, and he will have at least some shallow preoccupations quite outside the sexual range. He will have friends, and detachment. The woman flirt is immersed

in the technical details of her profession. She is therefore more liable to be caught by disregard (which no woman can endure), may suffer the pains she has so often inflicted, and may fall a victim, simply because her past conquests have made affairs too easy for her, and left her silly heart at the mercy of its own vanity.

iv

The attitude, then, of men and women to the first intimations of love is entirely different. To the man (as to the rare woman of strong character) it is a time of emotional turmoil, of active distress. To the woman it is a time of such engrossing delight and triumph that her being is pervaded by new significance. Charm that lay dormant rises in her; graces appear; her nature burgeons. This is not the case with man. All the thrilling transfiguration of the world which is recorded in the songs of poets is a sweet memory of adolescence. Men rarely feel this supreme unquestioning sense of wonder after the age of first love. In most it may occur at sixteen, or thereabouts, when they

deeply love a woman older than themselves. At the extreme limit men take love as poetry no later than the age of twenty-one. In men amorous rapture is a mark of emotional amateurishness. In England and America men of any education do not marry early, and so the beginning love is always a sweet memory that retains its glamour because it has been without completion. It is like a half-recalled melody which strays into the memory and stirs the attention only until it has been fully recaptured. The reason for this is easily explained, and has often been explained. It is that the mental attentiveness of men is diverted to other matters, and when the mind is occupied with a diversity of interests it is less susceptible than it might be to the claims of an overmastering passion. There may be attractions, there may be many slight and superficial loves—so that men may constantly and readily be emotionally affected by any girl whom they meet;—but prolonged distress is rare. "Men have died, and worms have eaten them; but not for love." In all probability it is only in periods of low vitality that men fall passionately in love. Con-

valescents recovering from severe illnesses; those whose circumstances (of loneliness, or of discouragement in work or careers) are such as to reduce their mental efficiency; those whose time is unoccupied, as is the case with the wealthy or the holiday-maker;—these are the passionate lovers among men of any maturity.

One can well understand why it should be different with women. Few of these have the concentrated energy to pursue a purely disinterested path. They do not appear to be able to go far without a sense of social support, of appreciation. They have no such resource of self-respect as men have. Their energies are dissipated. They must have friends to console, or lovers, for the real or fancied troubles that beset them. Appeals for sympathy are constantly made by women, whereas men who need sympathy over some disaster are generally too proud to seek it. If they are so unnerved as to try to get sympathy from a woman they will find that a degree of intimacy is exacted which makes both confider and confidante conspirators. A woman cannot give, or appear to give, sympathy without forcing confidences and without

making personal emotional claims. That is a danger, because claims beget softness and softness breeds a sort of spurious love and interreliance. If the woman then desires marriage she generally achieves it.

I say if she desires marriage advisedly, because while all women desire marriage, they do not necessarily desire marriage with particular men. They do constantly await with superstitious awe the bidding of instinct as to possible mates. Many writers make much of this instinct, the fallibility of which is demonstrated by many unsuitable marriages. While instinct plays its part, no doubt, impulse and occasion are really the deciding factors in such matters. I have never meant to suggest that in the relations of the sexes, in the attitude of women towards men, there was any analogy with the common proceedings of the spider and the fly. I have never suggested anything so crude. That may be left to scientists who do not believe in individuals, but only in species. This essay is based upon observation of individuals. Sympathy is often more genuinely given by sisters or by mothers or by those who are not sexually

attracted by the men who are involved. It is never given without a counter-claim. The woman gives sympathy out of a kind of vanity; for she is flattered at being made the repository of a secret. She smiles with secret pleasure at the tale of a tragedy—oblivious of the tragedy in her exultation at feeling a personal power. If one wishes to flatter a woman one confides in her: one does not imagine that the pity she expresses represents her true attitude. Her true attitude is one of gratification. In the noblest of women this gratification is subtle. It is merged in the desire to appear helpful, to respond to the expectation that has been formed of her. She is proud and happy: her sympathy is not an outflowing of kindness but a response to her desire to be of importance to somebody or something outside herself. Mother-love is very largely due to such an emotion. It is due to the sense that baby is dependent upon her for everything. It is as though she gloatingly said to the baby: "You can't do anything without me." Women love dogs and cats in the same manner—responding to the expectant love which makes these dogs and cats rather demonstrative

in their habitual affection. Where men are able to obtain food for self-respect in concentration upon business or other interests, women are entirely dependent upon personal relations for their life material. They are so puzzled and uncertain about the legitimacy and even the existence of their legendary selves, and are so entirely ashamed of the retiringness they perceive or think they perceive in their daily selves, that they crave as normal (not hermaphroditic) men cannot crave for anything that gives them importance in their own eyes. To themselves they have no importance. All importance must be created from without. They live in the esteem of their fellow-creatures. They are helpless and useless without it. The sense of uselessness is their secret grief. They rely wholly upon artificial status, artificial stimulant. That is why, in the first dawning of interest in a man, they are so strongly influenced by the esteem in which he is held by other women.

V

In this reliance upon outside stimulus is, I think, to be found one of the secrets of feminine

mental processes. I have already said that they must have excitement. Men do not require excitement to anything like so great an extent. Men can generate excitement for themselves. They do not need sensation or self-torture to the degree in which it is essential to women. If they require it they have readier means than women of obtaining it. They are capable of being interested in all sorts of things—at the lowest in the technique of their work; at the highest in æsthetic or business ambition. With women ambition is a rarer attribute. It does not go very frequently beyond the small range of social status or successful marriage. The excitement they need is of a different character. Women must have *emotional* excitement. It is essential to them. Denial produces physical effects too terrible to be simply imaginary. The nymphomaniac is only an extreme and specialized case of this general and insatiable craving. They are, as Stendhal says, always and everywhere avid of emotion, even though it be nothing more than "les plaisirs de l'enterrement en Ecosse"—a most ironic and poniard-like example. They seek this excitement, the

supreme need of their natures, at all times, even in time of war, as we may gather, apart from personal experience, from a reading of Mr. Arnold Bennett's cruel and panoramic exposé *The Pretty Lady*, with its remorseless analysis of the war activities of women of leisure. They seek it in sensation of every kind—from the Sunday newspapers to the various self-inflicted tortures of hysteria; but in general sex supplies the greater part of feminine excitement. Women are always trying to import into their too-restricted imaginings some of that excitement of which they can get so little in celibate or monogamous life. It is only in times of acute stress that there is enough excitement in their own lives completely to absorb this craving. That is why women—especially women with a tendency to hysteria—thrive on crises. Possibly the explanation of all this lies in physical causes. Women cannot generate real emotion. They are perhaps always, and inevitably, receptive rather than creative. They cannot beget life. The seed of thought, of feeling, as of life, must always by nature come from without: As in their highest—or at least in their most

useful—function they must be fertilized by the male sperm, so in emotion they must be impregnated from without or else remain sterile.

vi

If the suggestion I have made above be accurate, as I believe, it has considerable significance in relation to the feminine attitude to love and marriage. It is clear that it would explain why, in spite of the appearance and the common assumption that men are the pursuing sex, the contrary is true. Marriage would be seen as a necessity for women, because without response from men, who not alone explain women to women but actually create the mental life and form the emotional life of women, they would for ever be groping in aimlessness. I suggest that the need of women for men is more insistent than the need of men for women, because without men the lives of women would be wholly empty. They have within themselves no creative impulse; but must always receive this impulse from something outside themselves. This necessity would explain far more reasonably than any other that has been advanced the

failure of women to rise to the real heights of performance in the major arts. Lack of opportunity is the cause assigned by women themselves to this generally admitted inferiority. Any study of the position of women in various stages of history negatives this view. If one finds the explanation in this sexual disability, however, the problem is simplified. I have already suggested that the creative gift works in men strongly sexual in temperament—that it is in fact sexual in origin. Also I have suggested that frequently the creative effort in women is by way of arising as a result of sexual frustration, producing works imitative of male works in character but erotic in tone, or producing different forms of hysteria. Hysteria is in many instances the product of sexual frustration (just as in men hysteria is the result of sexual perversion and many neurotic diseases the result of sexual intemperance). I gave as one example of hysteria the writing of novels by women; but the form of art may vary though the cause may remain constant. But all these points—so far as they apply to women—go back to the same cause. The preoccupation of women with sex

would be due to the instinct that without men they have no lives at all. It is that instinct which would account for early experimenting with love, with the technique of love-making, with the impulse to jealousy, etc. It would account for the extraordinary need of women for emotional excitement, for self-torture, and so on. It would account for the preference for physical strength in men because that strength carries with it the probability of fuller sexual life.

I have said that women are first drawn to a man who has the admiration of other women. This would not necessarily mean that they are more herd-like than men; but that the much-vaunted instinct for a true mate is not an infallible instinct at all. It would go back to the instinct of fashion. Just as a woman, seeing a hat or a garment worn by another woman, is quickly observant and even envious, so that she desires just such another for herself, so, seeing a man favoured by other women, she calculates her own power to attract that man. Before marriage there is a great deal of sexual rivalry between women: it is to be observed in all women, exemplified in that vicarious jealousy to

which I have referred in the second chapter of this book. After marriage there is less rivalry; but the married woman, besides frequently weaning her husband from his male friends, also evinces jealousy of all other women. She needs him for herself. It is not simply that she complains, as the wife did in Little Tich's song, "I found him first"; it is that she dreads any interruption of her own emotional stimulus. When she no longer is jealous, she no longer loves, which means that she loves another man. Even complaisant wives are still capable of fits of extreme jealousy; but their complaisance is due to the fact that they still love and still believe themselves to have some vital share of their husbands' affection. They still, that is, believe themselves to be of some quite especial value to him, which no other women can impair.

vii

In the act of love itself women are more sensual than men. Their shrinking, which is due partly to shyness (not necessarily, as some men imagine, to prudery) is voluptuous in character. Their abandonment is greater. To

them a kiss is not simply the meeting of lips; it is the occasion for embrace, for mimic surrender. The joy of surrender is glimpsed or tasted many thousands of times in advance. When she is in love every woman is a voluptuary. She is not only physically yielding and clinging, completely passive; she is also submissive intellectually and emotionally. She desires only to respond to the wish of the beloved, to be moulded by him as putty is moulded. To her loving is a triumph of surrender, an abandonment of self. It is momentary Nirvana. Moaning, she receives caress with the same passive indulgence that a baby shows in receiving nourishment. She is at peace, half-swooning, absorbed in sensation. Not her part to think still, to retain self-consciousness, to symbolize the instant. That is for men. It is for men to think, to regret, to fear, with a comical mixture of startling associations and questionings. It is the case that many men, if they are inexperienced in love, are astounded at the abandonment of the beloved. It is a revelation to them. They are ashamed of having such power. They are excited and exultant, but they

are ashamed and afraid. The woman is neither ashamed nor afraid.

viii

It is the woman, nevertheless, who requires repeated assurances of love. She requires constant renewal of the original sensation of being captured. She is also unbelieving in love that is not demonstrative. A lover whose sole wish is unobtrusively to give his mistress pleasure will find that she is indeed capricious; but he will never guess the reason unless he be educated. From the moment of avowal, the woman desires to continue (though at heart she knows that to be impossible) her dual rôle of queen and slave. The desire to be queen is the wish to offer sacrifice to her legendary self; the desire to be slave to the wish of all that is sincere in her sensual self. She wishes all her life to be queen and slave, to consolidate her legend and canonize her legendary self, and to feed inexhaustibly her greed for self-immolation. Only in the eyes of her lover, and in his arms, can she feel that she has true individuality. Otherwise she is aware of her nothingness. She

is the human ovum, which can only have significant life when so fertilized. Her passion takes different forms; but in the main it arises from her need for a real personality. Only in another, in a man, can she find it. Just as all her life she has only lived when other people have thought of her, have been interested in her (so that she is the embodiment of what I should like to call, without censure, the characteristic of vanity), so in love it is essential that she shall be what her lover makes of her. For him she lives. For her his kisses are reassurances. For her his love is—not, as in the reciprocal relation, a source of shamed gladness, buried in self-restraints and other occupations—the source of her being. Only in love can a woman be said to live. His love is nourishment; her love is a voluptuous abandonment, a final justification of her existence. That is the difference between masculine and feminine love. It is the explanation of the familiar phrase about woman's whole existence. Defrauded by some dreadful accident of a love upon which he has set his heart, a man continues soberly to perform his task in life. He goes

from day to day, wearily, until passion cools, and his knowledge of things inexpressible deepens and grows more clear. He is full of grief; but his soul remains unscathed. Though the endurances of the hours be indescribably those of agony unappeasable, yet he retains his hold upon other realities and is reinforced by his own steadfastness. He is like the poet who says:

> "When I meet the morning beam
> Or lay me down at night to dream,
> I hear my bones within me say,
> 'Another night, another day.'
> . . . . . .
> Therefore they shall do my will
> Today while I am master still."

If a woman be defrauded of the love she covets it is as though she were at sea, weeping and helpless, in contrary winds. She becomes reckless, the pliant and unresisting victim of a thousand torments and accidents. She is without sense of direction, without will to steer. Wild blame and self-blame are all her thought. She may threaten herself savagely with moral disaster, vehemently attributing the responsibility to the beloved. His letters, mementoes of hours

in his company, poignant memories, are brought out for the sake of the pain with which they can fill her heart. The tortures which in love and in possession of the beloved she wantonly inflicts upon herself, in sheer physical reaction from impulse to impulse, are as nothing in comparison with the hysterical tortures self-inflicted by a woman denied the fruition of her hopes. She may long cling despairingly to the illusion that all is not lost; her morbid fancy may continue to picture secret joys which will never be hers. Finally, among all these distresses, anything may happen to her. She is no longer controlled by habit or obedience to the laws of society. Then indeed, as Byron said:

> "There is a tide in the affairs of women,
> Which, taken at the flood, leads—God knows where!"

V THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

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i

As society has grown more sophisticated life has grown very much more complex, and the never-ending development and patterning has made new variations in all our affairs. The rise of middle-class wealth has thrown upon the world large numbers of women who lack the sublime instinct of aristocracy and the drudge-impulse of the poor. They have in their bosoms a restlessness that is produced by an instinctive sense of incongruity. Women of the aristocracy, accustomed to be obeyed, to be kept as ornaments, and to take their position for granted, have little shame in their acceptance of a superficial form of existence. They are surrounded in youth by those living the life they expect to lead, and they are perfectly ready to carry on the tradition of this luxuriousness and expensive dependence. With an education of accomplishments they securely enter the marriage-market,

relying upon sex and breeding to secure a house and servants and an income almost large enough to meet their wants. Poor people similarly feel that they have a place in the material world; although one hears talk among the well-to-do about an industrial ferment which can hardly be confined to male workers. In fact one knows from the increasing disinclination of working-girls to enter domestic service that the love of independence is growing among them; and so it may perhaps be inferred that the restlessness goes down to almost the poorest people in the land. But the really notable feature in the life of modern women is the rise of a class which has the instinct to work without the economic need to work. It is this fact which has brought about the general feminine unrest of recent years. This fact, at least, coupled with the postponement of marriage by men who have greater difficulty than ever before in making an income sufficient to support a family in the kind of life to which they are accustomed.

These girls of the middle-classes have perhaps two or three generations of working or professional men behind them. They are better edu-

cated, on the whole, than the aristocratic classes. They are still not well educated; but they have that little knowledge which is a dangerous thing. They have read the novels of Mr. Wells, they have read some Nietzsche, they have read an elementary history of England and done some sums, and they have talked among themselves a great deal. The immediate result of this has been, in these classes, a curious blustering denial of the slavish instinct, a violent asservation that "Jill's as good as her master." I was once told, for example, by a really educated woman, how painful it was to hear girls at the Oxford colleges for women "showing off" (intellectually) before the young undergraduates. "They were so ignorant," she said; "and the men knew ten times as much as they did; and it made me ashamed to hear them giving such exhibitions of their own ignorance." This "showing off" is of course simply the ill-breeding of the *parvenue*. It is a phase; but it is a notable phase. It indicates the character of the unrest that has come upon women of the middle-classes, who can by no means bear to be neglected. It is a variation of the dominant impulse of the sex—to live

in the eyes of others. If these girls had been sure that they were learned, and if they had had a conviction of their own intrinsic value, they would have had no need for display. All immodesty arises from a sense of inability to cope with a situation by sheer virtue. The decay of religious acceptance, which in the past (and still in the present among women of some types) satisfied the morbid humility of women of low vitality, has led to a rise in the respect given to intellectual attainments. It has also served, among girls of the middle-class, to modify the drapery of the legendary woman. She now has the shrewd eyes of the school-mistress, and less frequently the far-seeing wistfulness of the priestess of some holy and immaculate faith. The aggressiveness of the modern girl is bluff, like her self-assurance. She still cries; she still yields to suasion; she still requires male support and applause. Her nature remains, but she has slightly altered her methods and her secondary aims. The verb "to please," with middle-class girls, has a little lost its attractiveness. "*Please* him?" they say. "Pooh! Why should I?" That is quite a reasonable position

to take up, if one can hold to it. Many of her sisters no longer please men. They go to the opposite extreme. Not pleasure, but displeasure, do they give, to their agony. Nevertheless, deserting her former desire to please, the modern girl, at the worst, must have an alternative. She must still use every effort to *impress* the male. She has not changed. She is still the same. The only alteration lies in the use of fresh armaments and the development of a new offensive.

ii

Accompanying the new stunt, if one were very unsophisticated, one would expect to find a ready abandonment of many of the privileges hitherto accorded to women in virtue of their dependent position. One would expect to find equality, so to speak, working both ways. It does not, and I am afraid it never can, so work. In this connection I am not going to speak of the chivalry of gentlemen, or of the attractiveness of the home, or of the symbolism of the cradle. I am going, I hope, to say something more to the point. It is perfectly true that the

behaviour of women is nowadays at times altogether intolerable; that they are ungracious in their manner of accepting courtesy from any person who respects their physical inferiority. This is all a part of their unconvinced "uppishness," and may pass, corroded by criticism. The greatest detractors of women in this connection are themselves women, which—if it be not imitative detraction, borrowed from the adjacent and impressible male—is a preparation for discontinuance. The point that has struck me is that one cannot, as a man, treat a woman as an intellectual equal. One cannot press one's advantage. She is quick, ruthless, unscrupulous in assertion and perversion of fact; all of which practices may quite as well be charged to the account of the volatile man. We are probably all acquainted with men who can lead us an intellectual dance into absurdity or confusion. That is not the trouble. The thing is that one can and does pin that man and scathingly reveal to him the fact that he is an intellectual will-o'-the-wisp. One can press him relentlessly. One can be rude to him. With a woman all this is impossible; because her

whole object in arguing at all is to impress one, her whole triumph is to have succeeded in her aim. It is not that she is a bad loser—I make no such accusation, for she is often both magnificent and pathetic; but that she cannot support the strain of prolonged argument, and that, realizing the source of her anxiety in deploying her forces, one is intellectually hampered, even to paralysis. One feels a point at which her knowledge gives out, and her fear arises. She breaks off action, as the naval communiqués say; or she takes refuge in pretence; or she is reduced to incoherence and finally to a sort of physical collapse, against which she struggles in vain. From that first moment of obvious strain one is courteous, because there is little pleasure to be obtained from out-manœuvring an inferior who admits defeat. It is like a professional chess-player sparing a tyro the humiliation of a short game. It is a discomfort. There is always, without any exception known to me, that constraint in intellectual relations with a woman. It is not due necessarily to male egotism or self-consciousness. It is due to the fact that a woman is incapable of thinking originally (cre-

atively); that she is incapable of thinking or arguing disinterestedly, from pure love of truth; that she is always half-consciously and guiltily bluffing herself and trying to interest her auditor in—not her argument, but her own ego. In others she has her life, intellectually as emotionally. She is not sufficient to herself. Defeat is for her not simply a question of intellectual inferiority; it creates in her bosom a state of wounded vanity from the knowledge that she has not pleased or impressed *as a woman.*

iii

Women, being unoccupied and rather vainly eager, have turned to politics. They have sought to obtain violently a right which I regard as unquestionable; and have encountered the stubborn resistance of obstinate men. They have been "splendid," and the vote has been accorded them. They now have something approaching political equality with men. They have also demanded education. They do not want education for its own sake, for the love of knowledge: they want it because its glitter has caught their eye. "If only I had education," they say, "*shouldn't*

I be fine!" As though education were a costume in which they will be decked to admiration! But they remain, after years of higher education, abominably ill-educated; and they will never be well-educated until they desire education for its own sake and for the sake of knowledge. What happens is that at the period from seventeen onwards, when men are working with determination to obtain knowledge and its corollary, understanding (since they know that upon their own efforts depends the whole of their personal future), women generally are not working at anything except their prime and peculiar craft. At this their success is not so much a question of unwilling application as of ready intuition and delightful experiment. It comes easy. The sense that marriage awaits them, and that it is the goal of their lives, is still constant; and this, which is a perfectly warrantable expectation and, as I have said, an unbreakable law of their nature, robs them of incentive to work at a task for which they have no such natural impulse. Their prettiness at that period, and the inclination of their sex, coupled with their power to attract men as at

no other time in their lives, causes them to play the customary pranks of the sex game. It is all splendid fun; but it is not conducive to hard work, the development of mind, or the success of those who set the education of women as the highest aim known to them. Women at this time are lazy, pleasure-loving, chocolate-eating, intellectually unambitious creatures; and, while this is tragic to the earnest feminist, there is nothing to be done while both men and women remain human beings who obey the dominant impulse. You cannot make sow's ears out of silk purses or scholars out of eager, lively girls. There are in life neither rewards nor punishments, one is told; but only consequences and, one might add, causes. And in this case the cause has been suggested.

iv

All the same, the war has produced great activity among women. The consciousness of splendour—which is the feeling that they are really doing something in their own eyes and in the eyes of men; the tremendous excitements inseparable from war—which have really given

them an emotional thrill in every class and in almost every relation;—these have provoked such a joy as women have never known. As one member of the sex wrote recently to *The Daily Mail*, "among all my women friends I have not come across one pacifist woman. I do not say there are no such women in existence, but I am very sure that there are fewer women in favour of an indecisive peace than there are men." This sums up the position in a very small number of well-chosen words. It represents the attitude of women simply and without theory. It states a fact. Women are occupied and delighted and ready to continue the war because they are conscious of being able at last to exert usefulness. They are united as a sex. How long it will be before war palls upon them one cannot say. Until the women among its citizens acquiesce, no nation in Europe can be brought to its knees. The women are running this country with very fair efficiency, considering the fact that they do not yet exercise the vote or lead our armies or take part in meetings of the War Cabinet. As Ruskin once said, women do not make wars, but they are always

responsible for their continuance. That is a truth, or at least a true saying. The war continues because the women of all the nations are living bathed in its reality. Not the bloody agony of the fighting; not the horror of shell-fire and never-ending cannonade. Not for them the sight of friends and comrades destroyed in an instant and blown to charred fragments. Nor the torment of daily subjection to unnameable squalors and disgusting spectacles and a nervous strain such as no men have ever yet endured in the world. Soldiers are not lovers of war. They experience its ugliness, its cumulative cruelty; and they know war to be foulness inconceivable. They fight because most of them believe that only by so fighting can they help it to reach an end. For women the reality of war is a different thing. It is a time for swelling hearts at the physical and nervous braveries of desperate men. It is a time for eager response to every kind of stimulus, the sense that they are at last in touch with life. It is a time for resolute endurance of all the sufferings of others. Women alone see the true splendour of war. They alone are able to pierce the horrors which

they cannot imagine, and to see the shining core of courage and sacrifice which they have never once ceased to applaud. The braveries and decorations of war-time stir them profoundly. It is not that they bother about the remote or proximate causes of the war, because, like most of us, they depend for their facts upon the daily newspapers. It is the fact of the war that exalts and exhilarates them; not the principles that underly the fact. Upon the tide of excitement they have risen to enthusiasm. In every street, and in every town, one may see women in their new uniforms, busy and happy and eager. They are working with zest for the prosecution of the war. They are keeping up the spirit even of most of our elder statesmen, with an infectious delight in all the magnificent performances of our troops, and our sailors, and above all our women. In drawing-rooms, in offices, in factories and garages and camps they are at last working with a common will, and talking about the war, and showing the indomitable spirit of Englishwomen. As the lady who wrote to *The Daily Mail* said: "Among all my women friends I have not come across one pac-

ifist woman." Men sometimes have leanings to pacifism; but they are unsupported by those whose instinct for war is at present all-powerful. Englishmen have been modest; and nobody with heart and eye could say any word of the private soldiers and ordinary sailors which would not be an impertinence. These men have seen and felt things which they are not yet able to bring themselves to describe. They are reticent about details, and they are candid about their detestation of war in general. They are modest and kind and thoughtful. They become uneasy under the voluble praise of old ladies whose patriotism takes them that way. They do not much care, I gather, about the press talk of "lads" and "boys," etc. But they are men. It has been left to the other sex to be run by the newspapers as a special and profitable stunt.

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But the war will have an end one day, and the glad rags of khaki and blue will be shed; and there must be some disbandment of our armies of women. Soldiers returning from field and camp will look to find opportunities for

work and wage-earning. Special war-created work will be discontinued. Factories will no longer require girls to fill shells; offices will no longer need as many women clerks; omnibuses and tramcars and taxicabs may revert to pre-war conditions. If the men come back, even decimated though the armies of all countries will be after a war that has destroyed, one is told, twenty-five millions of human lives, they will come back with the expectation of employment. However true it may be that after a war in the past soldiers have begged their bread in the streets, that cannot be assumed as a possible sequel to a war such as this has been. There will be too many of them. One soldier or a hundred soldiers begging bread may cause little disturbance; but a million soldiers without bread would produce a revolution. For many months now our celebrated Ministry of Reconstruction has had schemes for restoration of men to civil employment. There will no doubt be some artificial inflation of post-war manufactures in order to meet the urgent crisis of labour excess. We are told that with world-stocks of raw materials exhausted there will be

work for all. I cannot criticize such statements, because I am not a seer or practical economist. But I am sure that the return of our soldiers will involve unemployment for many thousands of women. The work they have been doing will cease; their unique opportunity for expansion and self-glorification will be gone. They will not be ministering angels or indefatigable war workers. They will be back again in competition with men. With the quite definitely righteous determination not to be blacklegs, they will seek to maintain equality of wage, the principle of which has been recently conceded. Whether they will form unions upon a large scale I cannot say; but only in union can they hope to do battle. What will happen to them?

Marriage, of course, is their staple trade; and marriage is an essential part, as I see it, of the social fabric. Marriage, however, is not going to be for all women. Even at the best, there will be many women who will find their legend and their practical activity insufficient to save them from maidenhood.

"For the lads in khaki will take the nice girls,
And the lads in blew will want the nice girls tew."

And although every man's taste in women—if one may judge by what one sees in public places—varies and is altogether incalculable, marriage will never, under monogamy, be possible for all women. Work will have to be sought by those who do not marry. But they will find themselves in conflict with the very men whom they now celebrate. Shorn of their splendour, thrown back into a state of disillusion and a dreadful restless desire for the emotional excitement of today, with prices high and wages as low as competition in the labour market will make them, women will find themselves at grips with another kind of reality than war. First of all, it is probable that our young men will be fastidious in the choice of wives. Already the younger men, spoilt by emotional adulation, are getting wary and critical, and the still younger ones are sharply becoming aware of the deficiencies of girls of their own class and age. With so much to be done, and with so much to occupy their attention, and the whole world open for their activity and exploitation,

men will require something more than sex from the women they marry. They will be chary of marrying their intellectual inferiors. Pretty faces and attractive ways will be too cheap to be valuable. So far from women demanding education for the sake of liberty and vanity, the case will be that men will demand from women something more than women, by their nature, can readily supply. Secondly, men fighting for life and country are in a different mood from men fighting for a livelihood. The ruthlessness in battle which war has taught may be illustrated in time of peace. No longer will men's hearts be soft towards the little women across the sea who have been so splendid. They will be hard towards those who would snatch from them the primary means of obtaining life itself. Then will the word "splendid" stink in the nostrils of women. The men will not listen to tales of brave lads and heroes. They will not want adulation, but bread and meat and clothing. They will not tolerate the babble of inconsequent old ladies who stream with patriotism. They will rather grimly and vengefully deal with such irrelevances. They will want work. If

the women also want it there will be a difficulty which will involve definite conflict.

No doubt there will ultimately be adaptation. The general flow and interaction of life is persistent, and a hundred years hence natives of England will see only the main currents of this time. But to us, who are submerged in these whirling waters, life is a maëlstrom. I suppose women will drop their specious patriotism, which is only a form of vanity; and will gradually—because they do not readily persist in unpopular opinions—accept the mental notions of the returning men. There may be a strong reaction in favour of the wish to please men. That will be the case if men return truculent, for one gives anything to a truculent person, through some strange shrinking dread of the consequences of refusal. This arrangement, however, will not account for all women. There are others. There are women who will not, who, by force of circumstances, *cannot* adapt themselves. It is from these women, and from conflict with these women, that the fierce sex war will arise. That it will arise I have no doubt.

How long it will be prolonged, who can say? That it will be a war of attrition I believe. There must insensibly be modifications in all these affairs, and we shall live perhaps to see a compromise attained. One thing is clear, according to my experience. If there is a genuine sex-war, based upon the struggle for life, men will be all upon one side. The women will no longer be able to have it both ways, as at present. They may demand without giving, as they do now, without realizing how little return they can make for the gifts they receive; but they will not as a sex be able to carry that demand to its conclusion without giving. They also will have to contribute, and at present the only thing they have to contribute is their sex. Every liberty they gain will carry with it a corresponding duty. They may yet learn the bitter truth that without men they are sterile, and the relation of the sexes may then be so rectified that gradually a fair partnership is achieved. At present, while many of them can execute cheerfully and effectively, the majority of women cannot initiate. They have not in themselves, as individuals, that self-respect that enables men to en-

dure. The endurance of women, noble though it so often has been, must have as its object the subjection or the service of man. They are absolutely dependent for moral support upon the other sex. Any association with women will prove this. I am told by one who has had twenty years of association with women in business that on the whole they are admirable workers, but never capable of continuous self-reliance. Sooner or later they require help and will appeal for it, abandoning all pretences. They will go to pieces suddenly, collapsing without appreciable cause. They cannot take a blow. In honesty and loyalty they are not, my friend thinks, in business inferior to men. In capacity they are inferior, but not necessarily so under good leadership. What is lacking is physical stability. In every emergency their reaction is emotional. If one is displeased with them they entirely lose *morale*. Upon the consideration in which they are held rests the whole of their happiness in work. Remove that, and they are dishevelled children, weak and vicious and despondent. At all times and in all circumstances they are (to their misfortune in

times of distress, but to their incredible fortune in all that consideration which makes for feminine happiness) predominantly sexual. They remain women. Nothing on earth, not even press stunts or the worship of the legendary woman who has taken to khaki and gaiters, can change them. At heart they will remain for ever a sex without power to create. They may for a time be arrogant and domineering; but I do not think they will find men to accept this attitude who are not themselves hermaphrodites. If they fight for livelihood in competition with men they will find men tough and unchivalrous. They will find that they can no longer have it both ways, no longer make the best of the material world and the world of sex. They cannot, as it were, be both masters and mistresses. That will be the issue of the sex war. Triumph for women would end in sterility in all the arts and enterprises of the modern world. Triumph for men might produce the education of women and the improvement of the world; but for a couple of generations the world would be almost unbearable for the most typical women, bereft of the approval from which they draw their

emotional life. Compromise, which is the probable ending, will almost certainly result in an undeliberate return to the state of things existing before the war. Nature will be too strong for women; and they will strive to be what they believe the men to wish. They will have learnt, though by means of ungrasped intuitions of truth, that so long as they cannot create they cannot attain to power except by and through men. And I have suggested that the lack of the power to create is due to a physical cause. It does not seem to me possible to overcome that physical cause. All efforts to escape from the consequences of it are the workings of hysteria, and the duality which produces hysteria is the conflict of mind and body, the frustration of sexual impulse, by will or otherwise, and the consequent effort of the sexual impulse to exert itself against inhibition.

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