

## NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

## THE EDUCATION OF GIRLS.

—◆— (H. S. Dalton, B.A.)

## ESSAY I.

JOD. THOU BREATEST TO US THE BREATH OF LIFE,  
THOU WHO ART LIFE ITSELF.

III. IV. II.

The student who has patiently followed these essays thus far through the labyrinth of cumbrous dissertations is now to lift his head from the darkness which abides under the skirt of Wisdom, and from groping after Her secret treasures of This Place *זה מקום נתיח*, to behold for a season the light of Her countenance without: to the end that from that which is above he may understand that which is below, and from that which is below may seek that which is above: and so learning to live for Her by whom and for whom all worlds exist may strive and fight for Her, not as one that beateth the air.

We are now to breathe a new atmosphere, the daylight of the outer and upper sky where it gleams abroad on the busy world, on the vast mart of individual and social interests. The shadowy cloister of philosophy must soon throw open its doors, and our disputants Ish and Adam walk forth together into the high road and join the motley throng of human beings as they are, in order to see and hear what now is, and to judge what shall be hereafter. They must carry with them no prejudices, not even such as seemingly tend to the social elevation of woman; for flattery is hardly less detrimental to that cause than depreciation. Preceding arguments have more than once been directed to point out the all-important philosophic distinction between *woman* and *women*; and we must not mix up the eternal Divinity of the former with the manifold and multiform failings and imperfections of the latter. Our task is to teach what women are born to be, and to show that the education and consequent habits of the world hitherto have directly tended to bring girls up to womanhood in complete and exact reversal of that course of development which belongs to their innate qualities and

powers; the consequence of which perversion—that is, the *first* consequence; for a ghastly and almost endless train attaches to it—is the undeniable, though perhaps not obvious, fact, that *no one has ever yet seen a real grown-up woman, and no one knows what such a woman would be capable of.*

This may seem a paradox, but it is really an axiom. No existing woman nor man would have become what she or he is at this moment but for her or his social surroundings, past and present. We are each and all what our social circumstances and the use we have put them to have made us; and the vast differences, especially mental differences, which we observe among members of the same sex are, generally speaking, quite as much, if not more, induced from without than arising from within; no idiosyncrasy being strong enough to stand quite alone in all matters whatever against the current of the time.

Well, then, who can point to a time and a place in the world's history where the current of social life, the influence of the social atmosphere, flowed in the direction of treating woman as the spiritual superior, or even equal, of man? Where and when has this been done, I ask—done so earnestly and effectually that adverse influences from without could never penetrate and vitiate that hallowed sphere; When and where did any woman, during her growth to womanhood, ever breathe a social atmosphere the main weight of which was not dead against female supremacy in either world? But if such a state of things can nowhere be pointed at, we come back perforce to this conclusion: *a real grown-up woman has not yet appeared in this world.* And even this is not all; the question follows, whether man can be fully human while woman is not. In the subsequent pages it will be considered whether he can. Meanwhile here is an exposition of her views on the great social question, written by a lady to the *Examiner* periodical of May 20th, 1871, showing how some few of our women, even as they are, can rise equal to occasion.

#### WOMAN SUFFRAGE.

SIR,—At the various meetings and conferences that have been held, and in the lectures that have been delivered, during the last few weeks on the Woman Suffrage question, an enormous amount of reason and argument in favour of the removal of

political disabilities from women has been brought to bear on it. It has, indeed, been asserted by several of the speakers, that all the reason is on their side of the question, and the assertion has not been disproved. "The objections of our opponents," said Dr. Lyon Playfair at the meeting at St. James's Hall, "are entirely of a sentimental character."

Now, while perfectly concurring in the judgment that in deciding all questions affecting great human interests, reason should have the first place and sentiment the second; and that in this particular question there is a weight of reason on one side, and on the other nothing but sentiment, and sentiment mostly of a very weak and washy character, it ought not to be put so completely out of the question as the advocates of the measure generally do. For even were the stout offensive weapons of reason sheathed altogether, it could hold its ground, and ultimately win its way by the preponderating force of the highest and purest sentiment it has in its favour.

There is now, say the opponents of Woman Suffrage, an amiable forbearance to the ignorances and follies of women, and an affection—occasionally a little contemptuous, no doubt—for their weakness and defects, on the part of men, which is very pleasant to see; while, on the other hand, women look up to men with a sweet fearful humility, confide their whole social and moral well-being to them with a beautiful unquestioning trustfulness that is equally delightful and refreshing to behold. All of which would be utterly destroyed by the social equality of the sexes that the gift of political power to women would necessarily entail; and also by the intellectual equality that, women's minds being thus raised to take interest in a higher range of subjects than they have yet done, must inevitably follow. One honourable member of the House of Commons, in the recent debate, reminded his brethren that a woman's husband should *rule* over her, and that "fear and blushing" were her proper mental and physical conditions: while another dutifully called to their remembrance the "illogical and unreasonable words which they had heard at their mothers' knees," and warned them that if this bill passed their sons and grandsons to come would have no such agreeable recollections to solace and comfort them in manhood and old age. He also called upon them to observe the dangerous element of priestly power that would thus be introduced into our legislature, priests and such-like persons having always a pernicious influence over the illogical minds of women; a line of talk—I won't dignify it by the name of argument—carried still further by another honourable member, who, with the eye of a seer, perceived in Woman Suffrage the beginning of a Jesuitical rule that would ultimately submerge all the Protestant liberties of England. ☐

But none of these honourable gentleman saw in this Bill the foundation of a hope that finds a place in the breast of every

one who takes a large and comprehensive view of society as it has been, as it is, as it may be in the time to come; for a new and higher, and—for both—a happier moral and intellectual relation of the sexes than the contemptuous forbearance and terrified confidence—the latter too often misplaced—that, on the showing of those who are doing their utmost to maintain it, form the type of the existing state of things. Looking each no further than himself and his own illogical woman—or women, as the member for Kilmarnock naïvely suggested—whom he finds it agreeable to him to have and to hold in a state of admiring subjection to his superior wisdom, their minds were closed to that far nobler conception of the human life, in its twofold aspect, that the promoters of this Bill aspire to see realised among us; not, as now, exceptionally, but universally, as humanity advances still further towards perfection. The conception of man and woman united, not as the master and the slave, the possessor and the possessed, which places an almost insurmountable barrier between their moral natures, but as co-inheritors of all freedom and knowledge and truth; working together for the same great end, the moral, intellectual, and physical advancement of the human race. The diversities of the two natures, not of necessity dividing them in every aim and object and pursuit in life, but recognised rather as intended that, the two working for the same purpose, each shall supply the lack of the other. The inequalities of two natures fitted together until they become one nature; the greater breadth of thought filling the space left by the narrower; the firmer grasp of mind holding the weaker in its place; the quicker perceptions stimulating the slower; the readier sympathies bringing out the more backward; and the more acute reasoning faculties, and the more profound, giving each to each what the other wants, all joined together harmoniously to form a perfect whole.

This is the relation between the sexes that those who are demanding the political equality of women hope to see arise, upon the destruction of the other which the opponents of the measure say—and with the very correct prescience—will be its inevitable result.

But that such a relation could be established until women have equal political rights and equal educational advantages with men is impossible. It is met with now, no doubt, but only in rare individual cases where men, contemning the power the law gives them, practically make it a dead letter, and where women, having educated themselves, notwithstanding that they are deprived of political rights, work by any indirect means that they can to advance great political ends, the furtherance of social reforms and the general welfare of the community. But the number of men who, having power, will not use it, are few. And the number of women who will have convictions and interests without the right to give them effect, and who will have

the courage and resolution to work on themselves to undo all that governess, and the schoolmistress, and the world in general have done for them—and when they have destroyed the superstructure of folly and frivolity and falsehood that these have raised up upon their minds to build another of true knowledge and common sense there instead—are fewer still. For it is a much harder thing to do; truly any one of the labours of Hercules was light in comparison! And yet this is what every woman must do who wants to raise herself out of the slough of ignorance and apathy and error about everything that is good and great, in which the majority of her sex are sunk, unless she happen to have had the good fortune not to be educated at all, when her labour is diminished one half.

The folly that supposes political rights and educational advantages would make every woman aspire to rule the State and neglect her personal duties, is scarcely worth noticing. It is sufficient for its refutation to say that as the power to vote does not make the bank-clerk or the shopkeeper neglect his desk or counter, to indulge in dreams of being Chancellor of the Exchequer or Prime Minister, there can be no possible grounds for supposing that it would make his mother or sister do so: or, if dreaded universal suffrage came to pass, his wife or daughter either; even though they were all educated to be bank clerks and shopkeepers' wives and mothers, instead of poor imitations of fine ladies as they are at present. Placing women on an equality with men would never raise them above them.\* The terror that some of these lower orders of men now indulge in, of the world under the new *régime* coming to such a pass that they would have none but female Gladstones and John Stuart Mills and Professor Huxleys in petticoats to marry, is without a shadow of foundation. Education will always be controlled by capacity, if not by circumstance; while, given its fair chance, genius is sure to rise to its own level.

But, as all political economists know, everyone who works conscientiously and intelligently in his own place—be that place ever so small and obscure a one—is giving his quota of help to the prosperity of the State. And it is hard for women, whatever be their place, to work either conscientiously or intelligently, with the moral and mental obliquities, consequent on their misdirected education, and the degraded social status that they suffer from at present.

Another of the fanciful terrors that haunt the minds of men opposed to women having political power, and the natural consequence of political power, political convictions, is, that politics would then form one of the general topics of conversation between men and women in society, and would introduce an element of bitterness and dissension instead of the sweet

---

\* That remains to be seen. [*Present Author.*]

melliferousness that now characterises such intercourse. This spectre, it is true, has some more reality about him than those already disposed of; he has rattling bones at least, and is not one of the mere "airy nothings" they were. I admit that women having a knowledge of, and an interest in, questions that men only are now informed about and interested in, would be likely to alter, to a very considerable degree, what is at present the almost prevailing tone of the mixed society of both sexes.

But I cannot think that this would be an evil; on the contrary, I believe that it would be a good; and a good so great that to bring it about would be alone worth making the change. As society at present exists, conversation between young men and women, who are in person or manner excessively unattractive to each other, is utterly insane and uninteresting to both, and done merely as a duty to society. But, on the contrary, if there be anything outwardly attractive in either to the other, often when only very slightly attractive, sometimes when merely negative, this intercourse assumes a tone called by different names in the parlance of society, but which is, in reality, a mutual excitation, or attempt at excitation, in a greater or less degree, of sexual feelings, equally pernicious in its effects on both. This will doubtless be called exaggeration. but I need only point to the lists of broken troth-plights and miserable marriages that the newspapers and each person's private circle of acquaintance furnish to verify the truth of the assertion. What do these innumerable cases of men and women, without the slightest real affinity in their natures, rushing into engagements and unions that end either in shameful faithlessness or miserable bondage arise from but the fact that, in the ordinary intercourse between men and women, there is no opening for either to know anything of the other's real mind or disposition, while every effort is made on both sides to excite a spurious admiration and love?\*

With no fear that educated Englishmen and Englishwomen will ever be roused by political feeling to throw wine-glasses or tea-cups at each other's heads, or, in any other way, to forget the respect due to each other, and each other's honest convictions, serious thinking people might well rejoice to see elements introduced into their association that would develop their real sympathies and antipathies, bringing together only those whom nature intended to be brought together, and sundering those who ought to be sundered. "Fancy," cry the ghouled-hunted "a Conservative man married to a Radical woman, or *vice versâ!* There would be an end to all domestic peace!" We need fancy no such thing. The skeleton of the rattling bones puts

---

\* As *spurious* it is no doubt pernicious; but were Divine Order followed, and sexual relations placed on a different footing, it would not be so. [*Present Author.*]

this phantom completely to rout. On the showing of those whose imaginations are frightened by these hobgoblins, such a thing would be an impossibility. But without going so far as to suppose that Conservative young men and Radical young women, or the reverse, would ever be led, by the difference of their opinions, to pull each other's hair or punch each other's heads when they met in society, we must believe that the great differences of mind that lead to these two mental conditions would then be so apparent that there would be no possibility of making a mistake on the subject; though the mistake may easily occur under the present state of things, when, if a woman happen to have any unlawful political opinions, she is frightened into concealing them by the threat of her else incurring the dreaded odium of all her male acquaintances.

But, with a new era of equal rights and equal knowledge for women, we may hope to see this reign of terror for both sexes come to an end. Then the day will come when a man will not shrink, through a miserable vanity and self-conceit, from owning that his wife is gifted with reason, as he is, and has the same right to use it; above all, when he will be ashamed to proclaim before his countrymen that he believes her to be such a slave to the bigotry and superstition of priests, that even his great controlling wisdom cannot direct her how to use her liberty aright, and that he, therefore, dreads to give her the common freedom and rights of a citizen—rather when he will rejoice in having beside him a companion and fellow-worker to aid him in carrying out his greatest aims, and in realising his highest aspirations.—I am, &c.,

ALICE PERRIER.

Still more powerful is the following extract from a pamphlet on the same subject by a well-known writer and lecturer, Mrs. Annie Besant:—

Lastly, I would urge on those who believe in women's *natural* inferiority, why, in the name of common sense, are you so terribly afraid of putting your theory to the proof? Open to women the learned professions; unlock the gates which bar her out from your mental strifes; give her no favour, no special advantage; let her race you on even terms. She *must* fail, if nature be against her—she *must* be beaten, if nature has incapacitated her for the struggle. Why do you fear to let her challenge you, if she is weighted not only with the transmitted effects of long centuries of inferiority, but is also bound with nature's iron chain? Try. If you are so sure about nature's verdict, do not fear her arbitration; but if you shrink from our rivalry, we *must* believe that you feel our equality, and, to cover your own doubts of your superiority, you prattle about our feebleness.

"Women are indifferent about the possession of the franchise." If this is altogether true, it is very odd that there

should be so much agitation going on about the subject. But I am quite willing to grant that the mass of women are indifferent about the matter. Alas! it has always been so. Those who stand up to champion an oppressed class do not look for gratitude from those for whom they labour. It is the bitterest curse of oppression that it crushes out in the breast of the oppressed the very wish to be free. A man once spent long years in the Bastille; shut up in his youth, old age found him still in his dungeon. The people assailed the prison, and amongst others, this prisoner was set free; but the sunshine was agony to the eyes long accustomed to the darkness, and the fresh stir of life was as thunder to the ears accustomed to the silence of the dungeon; the prisoner pleaded to be kept a prisoner still. Was his action a proof that freedom is not fair? The slaves, after generations of bondage, were willing to remain slaves where their masters were kind and good. Is this a proof that liberty is not the birthright of a man? And this rule holds good in all, and not only in the extreme cases I have cited. Habit, custom, make hard things easy. If a woman is educated to regard man as her natural lord, she will do so. If the man to whom her lot falls is kind to her, she will be contented; if he is unkind, she will be unhappy; but, unless she be an exceptional character, she will not think of resistance. But women are now beginning to think of resistance; a deep, low, murmuring is going on, suppressed as yet, but daily growing in intensity; and such a murmur has always been the herald of revolt. Further, do men think of what they are doing when they taunt the present agitators with the indifference shown by women? They are, in effect, telling us, that if we are in earnest in this matter, we must *force* it on their attention; we must agitate till every home in England rings with the subject; we must agitate till mass meetings in every town compel them to hear us; we must agitate till every woman has our arguments at her fingers' end.\* Ah! you are not wise to throw in our teeth the indifference of women. You are stinging us into a determination that this indifference shall not last; you are nerving us to a struggle, which will be fiercer than you dream; you are forcing us into an agitation which will convulse the State. You dare to make indifference a plea for injustice. Very well; then the indifference shall soon be a thing of the past. You have as yet the frivolous, the childish, the thoughtless on your side; but the cream of womanhood is against you. We will educate women to reason and to think, and then the mass will only want a leader.

However, it is not to be pretended that philosophic, any

---

\* Argumentative agitation ought of course, to be tried in the first place; but, should arguments fail, women have a reserve force in waiting. [*Present Author.*]



more than diplomatic, controversy can be carried on without a definite basis of negotiation; and if we are to predicate right and wrong of a given state or states of society at large, we must adopt some standard of what ought to be, whereby to judge the character of what is. It hardly needs to be said that the standard adopted in this work is the hypothesis of the work—namely, the essential spiritual supremacy of woman over every other being in the universe, and so of course over the universe of Nature itself, in the same manner in which an individual woman is over and above her own speech or her own clothes. Hence it is necessary to take the religious aspect of the question as the fundamental groundwork of every other aspect; for indeed religion is truly but the final summing-up of all kinds of practical utility.

The great lesson to be learnt, the fundamental axiom to be engrained upon the mind of every one who aspires to break the fetters wrought by a false and evil social education, is that this question of woman's spiritual birthright is one about which there can be no sort of parley or compromise. The writer of the letter to the *Examiner* speaks in a tone which seems to encourage the idea of sexual equality. Now this is right enough in a certain restricted sense, but in that only. It is only in view of the temporal co-operation of the sexes toward reunion in the Divine Female Unity that the question of equality can be entertained. It is certainly requisite that women should compete with men on fair and equitable terms in all mundane matters, great and small, in the government of Europe and America, as at the chess-board, or in any other game. But to infer, from the fact of the two sexes getting on best by mutual help and competition in the earth-world, that man can be the equal of woman spiritually, is neither more nor less than to make Good and Evil equal, or two Infinities—a manifest absurdity. It is the destiny of the masculine or evil principle in the universe to be finally reabsorbed into the feminine or good principle, and so annihilated; hence doctrine or practice which may be inconsistent with this knowledge must always end in futility and failure, as it always has done. This being clearly understood,\* and the spiritual dominion

---

\* Demonstration of the doctrines thus sketched cannot be given within the compass of this pamphlet, which has a more immediate and practical purpose.

being put aside as inherently and essentially belonging to woman only, we can afford to be quite impartial between the sexes in all other concerns. And the best service which those who have the opportunity can render to women is not to flatter or favour them, but to provide fair opportunities for both sexes to compete, and then pay or reward by results only, and not according to the sex of the worker, or on any other extraneous consideration. There will, probably, always be some physical matters in which a man can do better than a woman, just as there are others in which a horse or ox can do better than a man; these will soon show themselves under any *régime*. For the rest open competition will prove woman's best title-deed.

The one-sided system under which we live cramps the efforts even of wealthy benevolence. We see many a wealthy philanthropist, no doubt, men who would do good far and wide if they could, and who would not be narrow and selfish if they could help it. But they cannot help it so long as the social atmosphere they breathe is one of general suspicion and distrust, of caution against being over-reached, even by one's friends, for their own benefit or aggrandisement; so long as misunderstanding and envy take the place of co-operation and sympathy. And I say that so long as one of the sexes—and that the higher sex—is kept from its rights, and artificially stunted in its capacities, this state of things cannot be altered. History will repeat itself with its woes and horrors, for there is nothing to prevent similar circumstances kindling similar passions, however hard they may have been scrubbed in the meanwhile by the polishing-brush of an unsound civilisation.

*The Dialogists may now appear.*

*Adam.* You know well, Ish, how to state your views forcibly; but a good statement does not always involve a strong case. Granted the folly and unmanliness of sitting down helpless under admitted evils, it does not follow that we are safe in receiving with open arms the first world-betterer who comes forward with an offer of ready made universal regeneration. Many plausible panaceas have been tried, and you will agree with me that they have all failed in their main object. Why should we expect for yours a better fortune than for all those that have gone before?

*Ish.* The upshot of all which is—that there is never to be a sensible improvement here in the circumstances of mankind! If so, I think Wordsworth's supposition about fire coming down from far to scorch earth's pleasant habitations and dry up old ocean, in his bed left singed and bare, was no idle one. The sooner this planet is burnt the better. After all, the idea is not peculiar to Wordsworth or to his times. Paul, I think, said something about the elements melting some day with fervent heat; and thus much, at any rate, is well known, that certain of the heavenly bodies have already disappeared suddenly and unaccountably. May we not reasonably fancy that their inhabitants had been offered the last chance and would not take it? But putting poets and theologians aside, it is quite safe to say that in the absence of much greater knowledge than our men of science yet possess concerning the possible contingent causes of sudden generation of excessive heat in the sun or in some still more powerful star—the tenure of this little temporal home of ours, with its beauties and its drawbacks, may be much more precarious than we are accustomed to believe.

*A.* Save us, *Ish!* that is a tremendous threat. I hope this earth will take care to improve before so violent a remedy as that becomes necessary.

*I.* Not on its present style of going on. But my hope and belief is that things will change for the better and obviate all occasion for the human race to be rubbed out, and have to begin again at the beginning.

*A.* I hope so too. I do not go so far as to deny the likelihood of the world being bettered, I assure you.

*I.* Well, then, how far do you go? Let us have something definite.

*A.* I mean no more than what I have already said, that a heavy burden of proof lies on the side of such innovation as yours.

*I.* As heavy as you please. Only the proof, mind you, lies not in talking, but in doing. I do not ask you or society to take my words for anything; I ask you to do your duty by woman, and set her free from her present thralls, and it will then be for her, not me, to prove the truth of what I say. The burden of proof may lie upon me, but the burden of unperformed duty lies upon your side; and that is a far more serious matter.

A. Ah, then you do not rest your claim for woman's emancipation upon the fact of her essential divinity?

I. Certainly not. I make, it is true, both claims; but they are quite independent of each other. I arraign you in the first instance for systematically ill-treating a portion, the greater portion, I believe, of mankind. That is the first step; my assertion of her exclusive divinity is a step beyond.

A. I see. Well, then, to deal with the first step; how does it happen that the female race exists in a generally inferior position to the male race all over the world? You denounce the fact as an abuse; but I should like to hear you account for it.

I. It happens simply by the law of brute force; which law, as humanity develops more, that is, rises in the scale of its own being, gradually gives way to the higher law, that of spiritual force, which is woman's strength.

A. You mean, then, that man has no other superiority over woman than that which great brutes have over him.

I. Just so.

A. But is it so? Putting causes aside, and looking to their effects, do you not find yourself obliged for candour's sake to allow that, as men and women have hitherto been and still are, the male sex has excelled the female in performances which savour not at all of the brutal, but quite the contrary? To take notorious instances near home, what woman has written like Shakspeare, has composed like Beethoven—in short, not to enlarge, where have women hitherto accomplished works in any department open to both sexes equal to the best that men have accomplished? It does seem to me strange at the outset, that the superior sex should be beaten by the inferior in nearly all—I am by no means sure I might not say quite all—real practical doings. I will add that, let alone higher things, it has yet to be shown that men could not, by practice, also tend children, and make beds, and mend clothes, and do all other domestic duties commonly supposed to be women's special province, as well, aye and better, than women themselves. I am free to avow that my notion of superiority is one of superior performance even more than of beautiful appearance; and if women generally cannot do what men generally can, what is their superiority worth, even if it exist? You see, it is one thing to aspire to the glories of heaven, and another to condescend to recognise the utilities of earth.

*I.* Is that meant to imply that the glories of heaven are not worth taking trouble about, while the utilities of earth are? At any rate, then, let the glories of heaven be left to woman, and let man confine himself to the utilities of earth.

*A.* No, but I don't see how to reach the higher without employing the lower.

*I.* Well, man has certainly not reached the glories of heaven by his able use of earthly means. There can hardly therefore, be that connection between the two which you suppose.

*A.* Come then, I waive heaven; woman shall be welcome to it, so long as you leave earth to man.

*I.* I might retort that a compulsory cession is not meritorious; but let that pass. I cannot, however, leave man to his misrule and usurpation of earth.

*A.* I suppose he must go to hell, then?

*I.* Nay, nay; justice between the sexes in this world makes the best earth for the male sex and the best heaven for the female. But that justice has yet to be done. When it is done, done in fulness without stint or reserve, then the nations who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death will have seen the beginning of a new heaven and a new earth wherein shall dwell righteousness.

I grant, however, that your case would look strong enough so far as regards the test by works, if only you could show that women have had equal opportunities with men, and therefore that their backwardness in productive arts must proceed from some inherent defect of their nature. But my argument—which I shall proceed to make good in detail—is that the reason why women have not turned out Shakespeares and Beethovers, &c., is because they have not been trained from early youth in such a manner as to give their latent faculties a fair chance. I do not say but what there might always remain a perceptible sexual difference of mind as well as of body; but you have no ground for assuming that such difference would place the female at disadvantage; on the contrary, it is evident that analogy—the only test we have to go by—points to a superiority on the female side in the department of mind corresponding to that she already undisputedly possesses in that of matter—her physical beauty. Meanwhile, I am satisfied for the present if you sincerely concede the first step and give up the religious department of life to woman unreservedly.

## ESSAY II.

'BUT HOW BLIND HAVE WE BEEN, HOW WORSE THAN  
[BLIND!  
'DAY BY DAY WE RESIST THY SAVING GRACE.'

III. IV. IV.

*The Dialogists may resume.*

A. Come to the point, Ish; what do you formally propose to substitute for a woman's present surroundings and bringing up?

I. I propose, in a few words, that woman, from her earliest infancy shall be systematically developed instead of being systematically repressed and snubbed, as she is.

A. How is she so? I must say that I cannot see it.

I. Let us begin, then, at the beginning proper, the earliest influences common to childhood; and you will discover, before we have done, that these influences are the same as, or strictly analogous with, those which determine our character at the close of this life—character, that one thing which though we brought it not with us into the world, yet it is certain we must carry out. The child is father to the man, as Wordsworth says, in this sense, that the career of the adult is foreshadowed by the peculiarities of the infant; but then these peculiarities themselves assume a healthy or an unhealthy form, accordingly as they are judiciously or injudiciously treated by those who have the rearing of the young mind.

Now, although between the treatment respectively of a girl and of a boy just born there can hardly be much external difference, there will, nevertheless, be a difference, too subtle for ordinary people to observe, perhaps, but by no means too subtle to affect the infants. I mean the difference of what is termed atmosphere, in reference to the spiritual world. Even while the new-born babe is wrapped in a flannel covering and taken in the nurse's arms, the

persons around the latter will begin to make their observations; and their words, which the babe cannot understand, will be accompanied with looks expressive of affection or of indifference, which there is good reason to believe it can. The tones of the voice also have evidently a strong effect both on children and on lower animals. Now, without assuming that we should everywhere meet with much difference in the welcome given to a male or a female child; without any ignoring of the fact that girls are often welcomed where boys would not be—still I maintain that the impulses generally evoked by the birth of a girl into a family, the discussion of her promise of attractiveness, her possible prospects in matrimony, &c., in short, her *tacitly recognised place as a tributary and appendage to the male*—these things floating and being ventilated around her, almost from the very hour of her birth, coagulate the first stratum of that poisoned spiritual atmosphere wherein she is destined to grow up. The fondness for a baby girl felt in particular instances by her parents and nurses may happen to exceed that for a boy; but the fondness is of a different kind. Ordinary persons have been accustomed to look upon boys as those intended hereafter to be equals among themselves in proportion to rank and wealth, and to be the masters of women in their respective degrees. Consequently, it is not to be expected that the future superior and the future inferior in all matters of life should be regarded at the outset of their lives with the same kind of affection, even where the degree of it is in favour of the girl.

Thus, even before parents or guardians have begun to dogmatise about the religious or moral training up of the new-born girl, the atmosphere of that small society into which she comes at her birth is dead against her. Of warm love she may receive plenty; but it is rarely love of the most precious kind; at the best, it is love that will provide all attainable comforts and advantages for her lower nature, and leave—nay, *lead*—her higher nature to perish. Be they to whose care the infant is committed Jews, Christians, Mahomedans, non-religionists, what you will, they all agree in a common warfare against the divine order of the universe. So the new-born girl inhales an atmosphere dead against her spiritual life, so soon as her young eyes can discern faces and her ears distinguish tones.

Let it not be thought that kindness of any sort, however

mistaken its mode of working, is to be depreciated. The young blind, led by the adult blind, will both, indeed, fall into the ditch; but no one is further than I am from disbelieving that the blind guides, as a rule, do their best for their infant charge; and, moreover, I am sure that there are some amongst them so honest and single-minded in their simplicity, as to be capable of turning aside from the evil way and walking in the right one, if only they could be shown it. But, unfortunately, these are not the persons who in this world form the mind and set the fashions of society. It would almost seem as if mental culture were laboured for only to be abused, so that in place of the head being ruled by a good heart, the heart is misruled by a perverted head until it has ceased to be honest. At any rate, the knowledge of the sanctity hitherto attained by the classes who make it their profession, has not exceeded that amount which is proverbially dangerous; the history of priestcraft being a history of knowledge sufficient to become an engine for misleading the masses, but not sufficient to demonstrate beforehand what the event proves, that such policy must bring about the falsification and corruption of all social relations, and sooner or later bring down on its authors and promoters the just execration of the lamely progressing nations of the earth—still just, even although the nations themselves were doubly in fault; first for having made to themselves those crooked rules, and then for not cutting them down like rotten trees so soon as ever their character appeared. That character, it is true, depends upon society, which thus moves in a vicious circle. A superstitious laity sets up priests without natural qualification for their office; and these naturally take advantage of their position to keep the laity conveniently superstitious. And so the wheel goes round, without remedy, that I can see, but in calling to our aid the dormant capacity of the female race, and substituting the religion of nature and true humanity for an ignoble idolatry which usurps its place.



## ESSAY III.

[*The same continued.*]

I. I said that the fact of its social surroundings tending to affect the character of an infant, is one which not all minds may be able to comprehend. I think, however, that few will be able to follow me into the next field of inquiry, a spacious and sunny ground, where the objects to which I shall direct attention are large, and simple, and common; so that no hearer of my words shall be able to plead the miserable excuse of his own intellectual weakness.

However hazy may be the notions many people have concerning such things as spiritual atmosphere, they ought to be able to follow me when I pass on to the period where children begin to speak their little syllables and to take in the drift of short sentences spoken to them, to distinguish faces constantly seen, and to exercise acts of recent memory. And here, in this manifest opening of education, commences the working of that evil spell which is to bruise and blight the opening powers of the female child, and through her to ruin the character of the male children with whom she converses, and through both to people the world with beings who grow up, the one sex to be but half men, the other, it is hardly exaggeration to say, not women at all.

Where, then, is the commencement of this evil spell's operation? A little girl who has brothers ought to be intellectually the better for it; the sexual character of minds, under the present terrestrial dispensation, being as much intended for reciprocation as that of bodies. But what benefits do we actually find? The girl a year or two old, just able to prattle and comprehend a few sentences, is at once put by her mother or nurse, or both, into subjection under her male companions on every occasion of a little nursery quarrel about playthings, or some other storm in a tea-cup. At best the little brothers are told that they should give way to the little sisters on principles of *chivalry*, &c.,

so far as children can be taught such things; that is to say, because they are supposed to be the stronger, being boys, and the strong should always be generous to the weak. The boy is to be kind to the girl on the principle that the merciful man is to be kind to his beast. I don't mean that people tell boys this in express words: but if they insinuate it that is just as bad. They are doing their best, however unwittingly, to train up a child in the way of sacrilege and wrong; and when he is old—nay, when he has attained the prime of life—he will not depart from it.

A. Spoken like yourself, Ish. And, indeed, I am alive to the reality of how much may be done by early impressions for good or ill; but are you not making too much of it? For my part, I should be inclined to leave mothers and nurses alone until the children are old enough to come under wider influences, and then take care that these new influences, which can easily be made to obliterate the old ones, are of the right sort.

I. But why, my good friend, why go putting off to a convenient season the duty which it behoves us to do to-day? Why adopt or sanction a system of beginning wickedly and foolishly, in the ungrounded confidence that you will afterwards proceed righteously and wisely? If you may spiritually debase your daughters at, say, four years old, why not at seven; if at seven, why not at seventeen, and so on? Do you imagine it is so easy to say to the powers of darkness, Thus far shall ye go, and no further? No, no; the only safety is in teaching children the principles of divine order so soon as they are able to learn anything. And I do not pretend that it will be a light task to neutralise the evil influence of so many past generations. But it has to be done; therefore, the sooner all classes buckle to the business the better for all.

A. Well, but, Ish, how, for instance, in teaching young children, would you account to them for the greater brute force of the male?

I. In the first place, I have great doubts whether this quiet assumption about the male's greater physical force is not an utter delusion—I mean, of course, when we compare males and females of the same calibre. Of course, I do not deny that men in general grow to a larger stature than women in general, and have proportionally so much more of that force which is identical with material weight.

Although, mind you, there is no reason why this order of nature should continue. A very few generations might reverse it. For instance, I believe the largest and tallest human being now alive is a woman who lately exhibited herself in London; and I lately read somewhere that Cuvier remarked that the largest and heaviest brain he ever examined was that of a woman. These little straws show that the wind need not always set in the direction of man's superiority, even in mere brute weight and its force. Moreover, let me remind you that enormous importance should attach to the notorious fact that the existing modes of life of men and boys generally is very much more calculated to develop and harden muscle than that of women and girls. So much the worse for society and its customs; nevertheless, such is the fact. And the difference between the muscles of the same person properly exercised and not properly exercised, is second only to that between the muscles of different persons. Meanwhile, if great brute weight or force is to be called superiority well and good. Only in that case, while you point out to children how "superior" man is to woman, you must also point out to them how "superior" the elephant is to man, how "superior" a great steam-engine is to an elephant, how "superior" a falling cliff or an irruption of the sea is to the steam-engine. Let it once be clearly settled that superiority means simply a greater mass of inert matter, and then the assertion that man is generally woman's "superior" remains harmless so long as it holds good.

A. But are you sure that in a state of society where men and women had equal opportunities and no favour physically and mentally, there would not be some performances in which men would always excel women, as there would be others in which women would excel men?

I. I know of no evidence to show that men need always surpass women in anything except those kinds of hard labour, *e.g.*, carrying heavy loads, which a woman in pregnancy, or during her menstrual periods, ought certainly to avoid if possible.

A. Well now, Ish, how would you take measures for initiating very young children into your doctrine of Divine Order, so as to prevent the young religious or aspiring faculty from going wrong?

I. I do not see that there is any necessity for trying their

heads with deep matters at all. Not the ineffable Tetragrammaton, the universal ONE, but Elohim, the Godhead or Divine Plurality—in other words, not Woman, but her representative aspects, or individual women—constitute the temporal object of worship which alone can belong to our temporal conditions. We can worship and behold the One only through and in the Many.

*A.* Bless us, Ish! do not you call that a deep matter? I should like to find the child who could be posted up in it.

*I.* But, my dear Sir, all you have to teach children is that they are never to worship any other object than a female—their own mother in the first instance, if you like. As they get older, the idea can be gradually extended from the single individual. Surely that is both simple and natural.

*A.* Not quite such plain sailing as it might seem. It is all very well to talk of worship; but you yourself, Ish, had you been taught on your present principles when you were a child, would have knelt before a particular woman or girl, and prayed to her with a homage as purely external and objective as the attention paid to an article of food set before you, and perhaps also as vague as, let us say, one's ordinary notion of "London" or "the sea."

*I.* Well, I cannot help that. Of course children's worship will be childish. All we can do is to see that rudimentary and inchoate religion shall not develop wrongly. If a child can only "love" a woman in the way that "Charley Cram loved raspberry jam," that, at any rate, is better than its living in awe of the detestable nightmare of a false god, as all children who are taught religion at all are still compelled to do.

*A.* Return your sword, Ish; we must examine these minutiae dispassionately.

*I.* Willingly. I have said nothing, however, but what I am prepared deliberately to repeat.

*A.* Well then, now suppose that a child has reached that stage of religious development where it can begin to extend the sphere of its worship of women, or rather of woman; and suppose that two or more of those lovely objects of worship happen to fall out and tear each other's character to rags, in their young devotee's presence. It strikes me that the growing Church of the Future would soon learn that in mutual scolding, if in nothing else, the Divine

Plurality undoubtedly excels her humble subject, the male.

*I.* Well, that would be the first lesson—rather a rude one, it is true, and therefore to be avoided if possible—upon the difference between the Unity and the Plurality, between perfection and imperfection. Indeed they are pretty sure to find out imperfections and inconsistencies in the objects of their worship under even the most favourable circumstances; therefore it is to be kept in view that they should learn to look higher than the individual, so soon as they are able to understand the simple formula that there is a Woman greater and better than all other women, who rules the world, and some day or other will set right everything that goes wrong here. This, of course, is but a child's way of looking at the matter, and perhaps better modes of conveying the truth might be stated; all I strenuously insist on is that though it may be impossible to convey the whole truth to the young child, it is at all events possible, and a solemn duty, moreover, to convey to it nothing but the truth. Where there's a will there's a way: and if mothers, nurses, &c., only set themselves right, it is not likely that the infants and children under their care will wander far from the path of Divine Order.

*A.* I should be glad, nevertheless, to hear something more like explicit directions.

*I.* You must not rate any directions of this sort which I can give as anything more positive than suggestion. Here is a suggestion, however, if you please. If it be desired that children begin religious practice very early, say by repeating a short sentence at bed-time, why not tell them that the God to whom this little prayer is made is simply a Woman, like, but more lovely than, all other women together, and that though She cannot be seen and talked with in this life, yet if we pray to Her and trust in Her now, we shall live in enjoyment with Her in a happier life hereafter? To a very intelligent child it might be added that in that happier life there will be *only* women and girls, all good men having been changed into them; but this could only be said usefully to very thoughtful children. There then, Adam, I have done my best to throw you out a hint or sketch; you or others might, no doubt, easily improve upon it. Anyhow it is right so far as it goes, though that be only a little way. You would have shown the children—or put them in the

right road to find out—that the God to whom they pray is an ever ready help and comfort in trouble, an ever ready companion and sympathiser in pleasures, be they ever so childish, a real God at hand to heal and bless, not a false and mean and revengeful and selfish God afar off to disappoint and mock.

*A.* Yes ; I see no objection to that.

*I.* Contrast such a faith of living warm sweetness and reality, which daily experience and spontaneous observation would mainly tend to confirm without the aid of unnatural distortive struggles of imagination—contrast it with the cold blast of Infinity, or with the bloody horrors of the historic tragedy on Calvary. Is there not between the two kinds of religious education almost the difference between giving a child its mother's milk, and dashing its head against the stones ?

Those who have young children to bring up will do well to consider that they live in an age of rapid transition, when the old faiths are crumbling away and fated soon to lie mingled with the dust. Hence, to bring up children in reliance upon those collapsing walls is decidedly worse than to give them no religious education at all. It is but to expend time, labour, and means upon work which will have to be picked to pieces, upon lessons which will have to be unlearnt, and unlearnt by no means cheaply. If indeed a new and higher dispensation appear too startling to be acquiesced in at once, it is surely better to suspend judgment than to persist in a futile and discreditable course. Let parents consider that their children, when they are grown up men and women, living under a stronger and purer light, will assuredly not hold them blameless, will assuredly not esteem blundering affection any sufficient excuse for having forced their young charge to cling by their side to that which was visibly and palpably rotten.

*A.* You speak very harshly of beliefs which, although I do not share them, are dear to many harmless and benevolent people.

*I.* I mean no injury to any one's creed, regarded as a purely religious ideal. But when that creed is made the pretext for a social and political code of injustice and oppression, it must incur the condemnation due to the wrongs which it is abused to sanction.

## ESSAY IV.

[*Ish's Discourse continued.*]

*I. Sic fatur lacrymans classique immittit habenas* the *Saturday Review* of January 4th, 1868 :—

There are, it must be owned, few things on earth of less interest at first sight than a girl in her teens. She is a mere bundle of pale, colourless virtues, a little shy, slightly studious, passively obedient, tamely religious. Her tastes are "simple;" she has no particular preference, that is, for anything; her aims incline mildly towards a future of balls to come; her rule of life is an hourly reference to "mamma." She is without even the charm of variety; she has been hot-pressed in the most approved finishing establishments, and is turned out the exact double of her sister, or her cousin, or her friend, with the same stereotyped manner, the same smattering of accomplishments, the same contribution to society of her little sum of superficial information. We wonder how it is that any one can take an interest in a creature of this sort, just as we wonder how any one can take an interest in the *Court Circular*. And yet there are few sentiments more pardonable, as there are none more national than our interest in that marvellous document.....It is precisely the same interest which attaches us to the loosely-tied bundle of virtue and accomplishments which we call a girl. We recognise in her our future ruler. The shy, modest creature who has no thought but a dance, and no will but mamma's, will in a few years be our master, changing our habits, moulding our tastes, bending our character to her own. In the midst of our own drawing-room, in our pet easy chair, we shall see that retiring figure quietly establish, with downcast eyes and hands busy with their crochet needles, what Knox called, in days before a higher knowledge had dawned, "The Monstrous Regimen of Woman." .....Feminine rule is certainly not favourable to anything like largeness of mind or breadth of view.....Woman lives from her childhood in a world of petty details, of minute household and other cares.....The habit of mind which is formed by these and similar influences becomes the spirit of the house—a spirit admirable, no doubt, in many ways, but excessively small. The quarrels of a woman's life, her social warfare, her battles about precedence, her upward progress from set to set, have all on

them the stamp of Lilliput. But it is to these small details, these little pleasures, and little anxieties, and little disappointments, and little ambitions, that a wife generally manages to bend the temper of her spouse. He gets gradually to share her indifference to large interests, to broad public questions. He imbibes little by little the most fatal of all kinds of selfishness—the selfishness of the home.....Whether from innate narrowness of mind, or from defective training, or from the excessive development of the affections, family interests far outweigh in the feminine estimation any larger national or human consideration.....Justice is a quality unknown to woman, and against which she wages a fierce battle in the house and in the world.

The first question here is whether the accusations quoted, or any of them, be true. If not, there is no occasion to give them a thought; they may be set aside with the easy supposition that such writers are bachelors, or others, "crossed in love," and seeking to revenge indiscriminately upon the sex at large the wrongs, or fancied wrongs, they have suffered at the hands of individuals. But if, on the other hand, even growling bachelors and disappointed voluptuaries have nevertheless a real, solid foundation in fact for their ungallant observations, the evils they complain of will not be cured by being shrugged at and hushed up; on the contrary, the more you whitewash the outside, the more the inside will fester.

It is not quite accurate to say that a girl can be "turned out the exact double" of another girl; the differences between characters are as irrepressible as between faces. Yet, just as the soldiers in a regiment, with all their various characters, can be drilled into something like uniformity in working, so can the girls in a house or in a school, and thence in a larger or smaller circle of society, be drilled after the pattern of a fixed conventionality, until their life becomes a tissue of hypocrisy so thorough and so subtle that it may almost be called conscientious hypocrisy. The great Oriental maxim of human wisdom is reversed; and Know *not* Thyself becomes the rule of polite society, the basis of good manners, and last, not least, the *cheval de bataille* of that art of arts, that sport of sports, man-catching.

Let women of culture and of independent courage say what they will for themselves; I revere—surely I have well shown how deeply—the bright side of their disposition; but I am now obliged to treat of the dark one. And I



content that the sway of the False God throughout known history has so darkened the world with its evil shadow that the most powerful among female minds now on this earth can hardly hope to shake it off completely—at least, I have not met with such an one. Turn to any religion or to any doctrinal system you please, and the Male is still practically in the ascendant; can we wonder, then, that lay society, which voluntarily entrusts its spiritual interests to the hands of a professional class, should model both its morals and its fashions after the accepted teaching?

When it has come to this, that a cultivated writer in a periodical can state, without provoking the resentment of all readers, that “a girl in her teens” is one of the most uninteresting objects in the world, we may sit down. The world, in that case, must be quite topsy-turvy, and the whole must be less than its part. So it is futile to go any further with science or philosophy; those useless occupations had better be cast aside; for the further they go, the more they will go wrong. If she who is—or was intended to be—the crown and consummation of nature be among the most uninteresting objects of nature, it is hard to see reason for taking an interest in anything. According to this, it were better to be a mummy than a living and useful human being. Yet, for all that, is the apparent blasphemy entirely devoid of foundation? I fear not.

For example, some time ago I read a series of private letters addressed to a female relative from an unfortunate young lady, who had given birth to an illegitimate child, and had evidently suffered much in mind, if not in body, before she departed this life a short time after. The letters evinced no want of good feeling of a certain sort; they expressed no anger against any one but herself; but here was just the hitch. I confess that, with all good will to sympathise with the girl's sufferings, I could not help laughing at these letters, and feeling my sympathies cheated. It was all such unexceptionable sin, sorrow, and repentance; the regular old story unaltered. The sin and sorrow were all done into such correct, angular, book-like phrases; they were so much in the style of the Perfect Letter-writer, so unmistakably the sin and sorrow of a well-drilled Miss, instead of the unobtrusive grief of a natural, fresh girl; the Oh!'s and Ah!'s came into their right places with such a weary, dreary precision of unbroken common-place; the

whole business was so exactly what one has met with over and over again in penny romances—that the most pathetic passages in the communications of this accurately-sin-ning and accurately-repenting Miss were certainly more provocative of a guffaw than of a sigh. It was the most complete travesty and burlesque of woe that I ever came across

*A.* Poor Miss! You are a very hard-hearted philosopher, Ish.

*I.* I hope not; but I freely admit that I hate humbug, especially second-hand humbug. And especially, to do our English girls justice, does it sit ill upon them, who have the sterling heart-of-oak nature hidden beneath all this confounded rubbish, which would enable them to rise high above it all, if they chose.

*A.* Well, well; continue.

*I.* The amount of mischief, both to the individual and to the society whereof the future woman or man is to form a part, which is done by this systematic early perversion is not to be estimated—unless, indeed, by forcing ourselves to contemplate all the misery and wickedness that contact with the world can reveal. From the horrors of a gigantic war, with its mangled and agonised bodies, its desolated and desecrated homes, down to the pettiest domestic troubles and quarrels, we may only too safely affirm that early false impressions respecting good and evil lie at the bottom of it a.

*A.* That is an awful impeachment. And I must say, it seems to me far too much to assume.

*I.* Treat it as an assumption if you will, but I think you will find examination bear it out. Let us continue the examination. The first antagonism between children that rests on inculcated principle is that of the sexes. This, therefore, leaves its traces on brothers and sisters permanently, while all other differences and quarrels are effaced. The young girl has been distorted and coerced into a false appreciation of the other sex from her earliest years of intelligence; is she likely to forget the lesson during those most susceptible years of her life, the years approaching puberty? Nay, nay; fidelity to her education, be it good or bad, is, if any other, a characteristic of the female; after you have once spoilt her in early youth, it is very hard—although I do not say impossible—to un-spoil her afterwards. Very well, then; the character of the future mis-

tress of the home, as the Saturday Reviewer says, is dormant in the mis-educated, and *therefore* uninteresting, girl "in her teens" that he sees before him. But to vitiate the home is to vitiate the world; for the characters, male or female, which can withstand home influence are few and far between. And the home influence is polluted thus in all departments. While the children are very young the boy is encouraged to be rough and "manly" in his exploits under the nursery-table, or among the garden flower-beds, or in the orchard, while the girl is to be meek and mincing and "maidenly;" never to wrestle and kick about and harden her muscles, nor to raise her voice and strengthen her lungs. And now, when the children are passing out of childhood, and leaving off extremely childish things, the same principle is carried on, only that, in addition to previous repression, the girl's mind, as well as her body, is attacked by her blind guides, and she is taught to repress her natural curiosity about sexual relations, which could be legitimately satisfied with judicious, but thoroughly scientific, instruction, analysing the passions, and bringing them into subjection to the cultivated intellect; and so she is forced to think about these things only in that cramped, unwholesome, morbid, cowardly, and generally idiotic way in which a polite society or a polite church dares to think of them. Is it any wonder if a girl in her teens is made uninteresting? Yet, for all that there is a part of her which not even this persistent *régime* of devilry can suppress: and whoso hath eyes to see it, let him see it.

A. The compliments of the season seem to be flying about to-day. Would it not be well, perhaps, to ventilate the matter in a rather more forensic tone?

I. No; I doubt if it would. Silver speech is not likely to be listened to by those with whom I have to deal. Well, then, again; to take another point of a girl's education. A favourite feminine virtue is supposed to be *humility*. But humility towards whom or what? If humility of the individual human being towards the universal Human Being were meant, well and good. But then this would apply even more to man than to woman, since he is only the indirect form of the Universal One, while she is the direct form. Or if it were meant to convey that mankind, children especially, should never be too proud to learn, but always take to heart a useful hint on any subject, no matter

from how obscure a quarter; or if it were meant that we should be just, even in our quarrels, and never ashamed to recede from a clearly false position, and to make amends to the extent of our error—this humility also would be most commendable and valuable. I doubt whether any one could become a philosopher without it, or indeed attain real greatness in any walk. So here are two kinds of humility which I admit to be very desirable in man or woman. But it is easy to see that the “humility” inculcated by priestcraft and its morals is something altogether different. By this sacerdotal humility, which enslaves the conscience, beauty is to be humbled to material size and weight, sweetness to coarseness, intelligence and refinement to stupidity and brutality, the law of love to that of physical tyranny among barbarous peoples, and of moral tyranny among others; the higher organism is to be humbled to the lower; and thence by logical necessity—although this is not admitted—Spirit to Matter, the Creator of the world to its subordinate forms, Good to Evil.

*A.* You have a fine talent for making mountains out of molehills.

*I.* I thought you said just now that the miseries of this world were not a molehill, but an awful contemplation. *They* are the molehill which the perversion of young girls has created.

*A.* Nay, that is just the question.

*I.* Be it so; you will tread any other road in vain to settle the question. But that, of course, can only be finally decided by your own experience. Meanwhile, pray go and “humble” yourself as the Chair of St. Peter would tell you, and see whither your “humility” will lead.

*A.* Well, keep your course again.

*I.* Not even the excuse of negligence—a fault to which we are all more or less prone in our various ways—can be alleged in defence of the ideas of their mutual duties in which those responsible cause the young of each sex to grow up. It will not avail for parents to say, “Ah, well; we can’t be at the trouble to bring up our children differently from other people’s children; they must take their chance.” This kind of shelving the dispute will not hold, because to take trouble is just what they do, as it happens. They take enormous pains and trouble, only it is in a wrong direction. The work of encouraging the frolics and freaks

and gambols and outspokenness of boys, and of snubbing and strait waistcoating those of girls, is an aggregate of trouble in itself. Even if the work be shifted altogether to schoolmasters and mistresses, a sacrifice of money is generally entailed on the parents; and a few would send their children off without any inquiries about the place of their paid-for instruction; so that in any case a conscious effort has been made, and its results deliberately calculated upon. Hence, supposing that utter indifference what becomes of children were an excuse for allowing them to be perverted, that indifference is, generally speaking, not a fact, and the excuse falls to the ground. But, indeed, it is hardly worth considering; for there are comparatively few children so isolated from their home as to be out of the way of home influence on social relations.

Example is a powerful agent in the education of the young. Any attempt to give them a sound ideal of conduct is sure to fail, so long as girls and boys hear grown-up women talking about the inability of ladies to do this or that, to take long walks, to bear heat or cold, to be out in the evening damp, to take their part thoroughly in any game or amusement, in anything that calls for exertion of body or mind; and while they hear grown-up men ratifying and encouraging all this absurd nonsense and delicate-ladyism, contrasting feminine fragility and good-for-nothingness with their own god-like strength and wisdom. Is it to be expected that the buds of ideality, coming out in that imitation of men and women at which all children delight to play, should take any other form than that of setting up their men as heroes or villains of unlimited power, and their women as a set of washy fairies, bound to wait on their hirsute lords, and do their pleasure? These things are not trifles; for the future character of children is made even more at play than at work. The same vein runs through their amusements, whether they be children or adults. From "This is the man all tattered and torn, that kissed the maiden all forlorn, that milked the cow with the crumpled horn," &c., up—if, indeed, it be not rather down than up—to the most fashionable of sensational love-novels, the same light and airy aspect of woman as the "forlorn" dependent of man, awaiting his favour, is presented by a myriad of channels to the imagination of youth. In the nursery, in the playground at school, at table with

their elders, at public worship interpreted from the pulpit, in the entire routine of daily and weekly life, it is the same old story, the same sophistry and hypocrisy and arrogance on the one side; the same external cringing acquiescence, but practical hostility, on the other. On the one side are developed selfishness and contempt; on the other, servility, guile, and spite. This is not said at wedding-breakfasts; but it is, nevertheless, the ugly reality inaugurated there and everywhere else. And children cannot fail to see it, no, not more than they can fail to acquire the rudiments of their mother tongue. It may be wrapped in a silver paper of plausibilities, but it is a poison whose work is sure.

I hardly need insist longer on the importance of early impressions; these have always been recognised, and acted upon, alas! with only too fatal success by the self-seeking enemies of light and knowledge. The question before us is this: has any people in any age ever tried the experiment of an unprejudiced and unrestrictive education of girls, an education which, starting with no foregone conclusions about feminine capacity or duty, seeks rather to find out what girls can do than to restrain them from doing? If not, it is surely time that we should turn and try while liberty of choice is left. The old religions of the world have proved themselves to be mostly delusions; the morals of the world have been something worse; failure has been stamped upon every undertaking, however grand, to improve the condition of mankind at large in any degree proportioned to the sacrifices demanded. But expediency is only one view of the question, and some might think it the lower view. There are the requisitions of eternal truth and justice to be satisfied; and if we who have the task entrusted to us to perform freely and generously, neglect our duty from short-sighted motives of whatsoever kind—those laws of disintegration which are inexorable in reforming the lower kingdoms of nature, will certainly not be long delayed in their action upon a community which has shown repeatedly that it is not fit to work out its destiny for itself.



