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NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

ISH'S CHARGE TO WOMEN.

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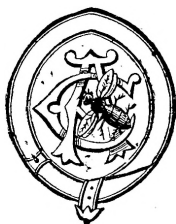
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"THE EDUCATION OF GIRLS"

AND

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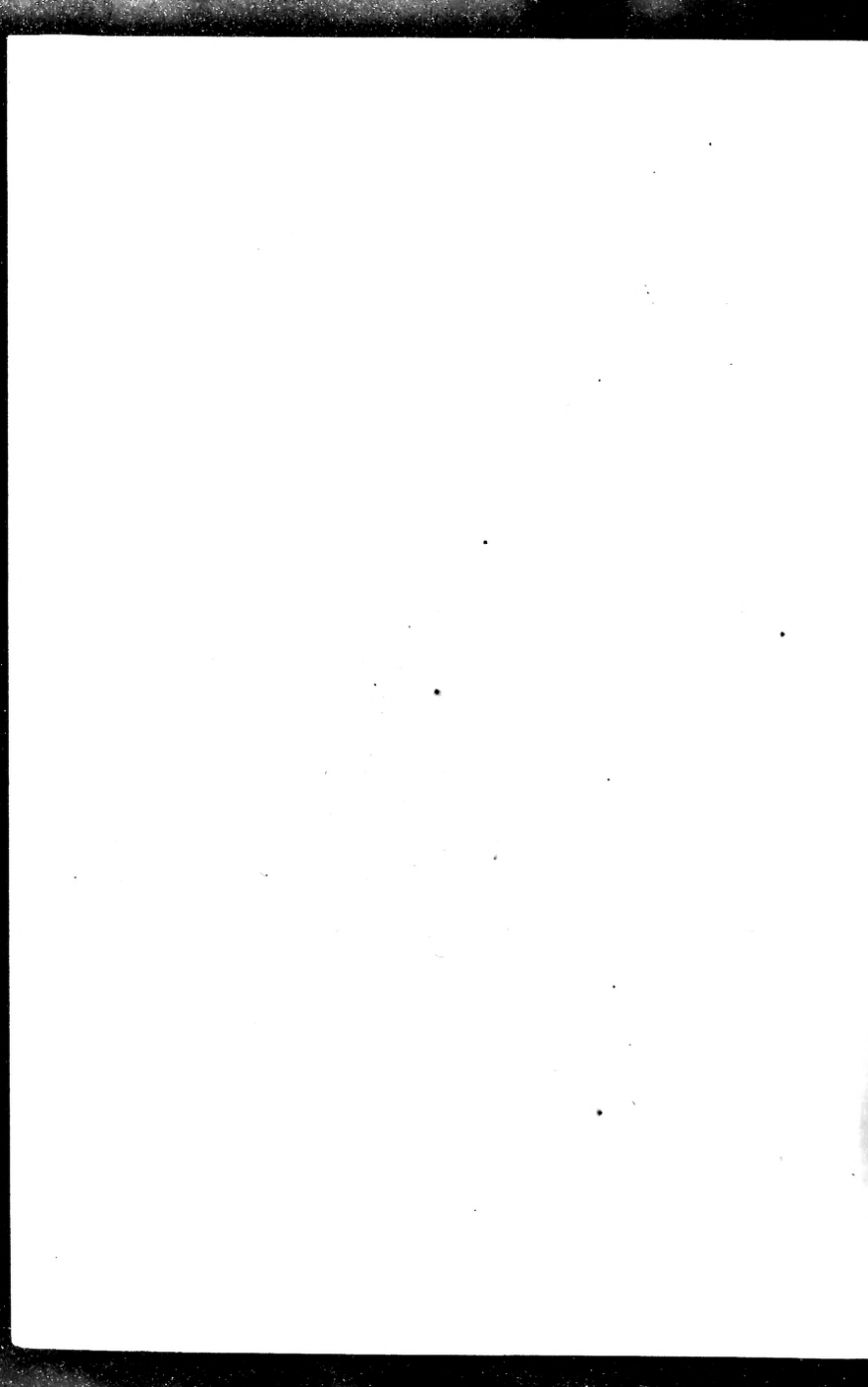
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PREFACE.

THE following extract is the concluding portion of the same book (second or prose volume) from which the author's former pamphlet, "The Education of Girls," was taken.

The asterisks mark omission of such passages as would be likely to give the reader a false impression, when separated from the main work to which they belong and which is intended for scholars.



ISH'S CHARGE TO WOMEN.

I HOLD that all fundamental reforms must begin at the foundation, not at the summit. The foundation of a State is its masses, not its select few. The few may influence the many to move, but move without them they cannot; or, if they do, the new position thus taken up is soon found inharmonious and untenable. We cannot be just in our estimation of historic despots, lay or ecclesiastical, without recognizing the fact that the serfdom of any people is in the last resort its own fault, after all, or at any rate is its own doing. No one can be king or priest but by consent or submission of the masses over whom he presides; the mode of bringing about that acquiescence may be another matter; but there it is in any case, and is indispensable to the existence of any domination, good or bad. If you tell me that minds of high quality and culture easily lead the sheep-like *plebs*, as these in their turn govern domestic animals by virtue of human understanding—I reply that the people are not born to be sheep-like, while the lower animals cannot help being what they are. The same kind of effort which creates an aristocracy, or the more powerful aristocracy of talent, would, if exerted, at least raise the masses to a capacity for self-government in matters of routine; so that the idea of a divine right to govern despotically from above, is as one-sided and unphilosophic as the opposite extreme one, that the masses can act without organization. I do not say, mind you, that the masses are to be expected to *originate the ideas* which lead to change; what I say is that no matter by whom progress has been conceived, it must be executed by the mass moving voluntarily under leaders, not by leaders trying to move the unwilling mass.

As, then, little argument is needed to show that woman's influence in the home and in social gatherings is already next to omnipotent in swaying the prejudices both of her own and of the other sex, I may safely affirm that whatever

changes are to be made in the old grooves of thought and feeling by the present adult generation—I mean apart from the boundless resource at hand in a revolutionized training of the young—must depend for their reality and permanence on the hearty co-operation, if not the independent will, of the female community at large. The emancipation of women must be effected primarily by women themselves.

Since the opponents of woman's emancipation are so fond of babbling the old ditty that her sphere is the home, I will take them at their word; not, indeed, to the extent of admitting that woman's sphere ought to be anywise restricted to the home, but to the extent of giving them *carte blanche* to exaggerate her power there as they please. I believe their most dilated expressions about the sway of woman's secret influence will not much overshoot the mark. And what is more, the men who are most permanently affected by it are those of strong character, because the source of such strength lies in receptivity whereby they consolidate the results of others' experience. Hence the rulers among men being themselves subtly and secretly guided by women, it may be said with some truth that women govern the world after all, though they are denied any formal acknowledgment of their sway.

How, then, women of our day, do you employ your powers, such as they are? I do not so much ask with what motives you employ them, as with what results. The motives may be generally conscientious; but are the results generally beneficial? What has your influence done toward improving and ennobling mankind? Has it produced international peace and concord? Has it established internal content with any people? Has it removed the injustice of the contrast between pauperism and wasteful superfluity? Has it uniformly discouraged all cruel sports—Spanish bull-fights, for example—wherein helpless lower animals are the sufferers? Has it done *anything* which might not equally well have been brought about in due time, had each community consisted only of men? I fear we shall find it hard to prove that women have moved *en masse* toward many—if, indeed, any—really humanizing events. Good and high-minded women there are in abundance, scattered over the world; but there are also good and high-minded men. What I seek to discover is something special and peculiar which has been wrought by women acting in a collective.

capacity; something which shows that, the man-breeding office apart, this world would not have got on as well without them.

* * * *

I believe we shall have a tremendous revolution; and then order, the true and Divine Order, will emerge out of the chaos. But all this does not, and cannot make the present abuses tolerable; and it is my duty to place them before you without gloss, however little grace and favour I may win by so doing.

What are we to conclude from the obvious facts just noted? Anything against woman's untutored nature? No. The nature of woman is faultless; it is what women are *made* that is corrupt and abominable. שחת לו לא בניו מומם דור עקש ופסל דור *Corruptions Hers?* Nay. *Her* children, theirs is the spot, perverse and crooked generation that they are! Women are capable of everything both for good and evil; and it is evil that they are mostly reared amidst. And so far, of course, the fault is not theirs individually; but it *is* their fault individually as well as collectively, that when they are called upon to rise, either by men or by other women possessed of exceptional wisdom, they are deaf to every appeal that ranges higher than petty personalities which afford occasion for over-reaching and mean jealousy. *Esprit de corps*, with the average female, means nothing like the dignity of the female sex; it means only the ephemeral consideration one clique or party may succeed in gaining over another, to go in its turn to the wall when new favourites come into fashion. How easily, too, the warmest friendship between women is cooled and changes into spite when one of them happens to obtain a little worthless social triumph, or still more when she wins a race for the condescension of one of us sons of God! The dear sweet angelic darling of yesterday is the nasty detestable creature of to-day, as all black now as she was all white then. I do not need to be told that women, like men, must have their occasional quarrels; but a fit of anger and even a fierce resentment prolonged until the cause is removed, are quite different things from a systematic black envy which is called forth by the success of a friend, and would rather hinder than help many an acknowledged good work because it is associated with a particular person and a rival.

In the face of such treachery in the camp, such untrustworthiness of women in relation to each other, is it any wonder that the female race has not yet shaken off its

vassalage? Unity of purpose and of plan is needed to effect the liberation ; and the only unity that I have observed consists in a common consent to do nothing that may efface personal importance for the general good. I do not deny that there are exceptions to be found, but they are as one in a thousand. What, then, is the use of trying to better those who virtually reply that they do not want to be bettered? To what purpose is the multitude of philosophies and sciences and studies and arts to which many of you, female friends, equally with us give both reverence and practical attention, when as an answer to the urgent representation that study ought, among other things, to raise you to a position of utility where it will be possible for your hidden capacities to come forth, you treat what is said as though such notions were mere jugglers' *tours de force*, or curiosities kept in a cupboard to be shown to visitors and put back again when they have afforded amusement? For I will challenge any man who has woman's cause at heart—and I am thankful to believe that there do exist a few such men at last—to broach opportunely any department of this great subject, say at a quiet evening or afternoon party where there are young ladies to talk to—not some two or three superior women gathered with difficulty out of the society of a metropolis, but just chance acquaintances of the average stamp—and I will ask you to imagine for yourselves what kind of response he will meet with or what impression he will make. Immediately the strange novelties of reform are propounded, the girls will glance into his face to see if he is essaying a sally of humour at which they are expected to laugh: and finding that he is not, they will politely compliment him on his chivalrous and liberal feelings toward ladies, fancying that this stale old compliment was what he was fishing for, of course. And then, as soon as they get an opportunity to change the subject without rude abruptness, they will lightly laugh it all off, as who should say, 'Ah, these world-reforming ideas are very romantic, and gentlemen can make very pretty speeches to ladies upon them; but of course they wouldn't do for real life; we should all be unsexed and lose our chance of a good match.' I really do not apprehend having exaggerated the case; the shallowness of the average young lady's mind is something that must be probed to be believed. The process is not without interest for the curious psychologist; he need but press her a little toward first principles upon any

topic whatever, even her favourite one, and he will soon find that *her* first principles consist in some great—or still better, fashionable—person's *ipse dixit*, which it has never occurred to her to examine, far less to call in question. From religion downwards—or perhaps I should say upwards in this case—the finished young lady does and thinks almost everything that she does and thinks merely because some one told her to do so; and it does not much matter to her who that some one was. Independent judgment is, in the first place, beyond her capacity, and in the second, as indecorous in her opinion as independent action would be. So there she lives and moves and has her being, a flaccid automaton of the Proprieties, an Elegant Phenomenon, from whom both quantity and quality have been successfully washed out; her very talent, if she has any, having been trimmed and pared to avoid originality and to produce indifferent copies of the work of some one with a name. Such is the description of building we style a young lady; and of ladies not young it may be said that the departed grandeur of a youth like this leaves traces of its glory in the midst of their decay.

These are not pleasant contemplations, but they have to be faced; nor can I halt in the task to be performed through fear of provoking the enmity of those I would serve. Yet let not the position be misunderstood. If instead of what I now see when I look around in the world, I saw women everywhere awake to their degradation, complaining bitterly of their moral chains, and striving unanimously to cast them off, with mean jealousies and petty rivalries for worthless objects laid aside in presence of that great purpose, just as the heterogeneous states of a federation waive their differences in order to withstand a common enemy; not a hint would I then have breathed touching their acknowledged evils, which I should regard as already put away by the earnest determination that they shall be. But when, so far from perceiving such a mind in women, I find them for the most part indolent and apathetic, and that, not because their sympathies and interests are absorbed in some other great problem demanding imperatively a prompt solution, but merely because they find it less troublesome to bow before idols than to be valiant for any form of truth upon earth, less irksome to submit to small trials and feel small pleasures, to live in a sphere altogether small, than to ennoble themselves by one serious effort; then I

am bound to say that it is not so much vice or crime which can drag human nature down to the lowest depths, as this vile, sneaking, pitiful weakness of character, which amalgamates only with the worst side of experience, not having energy to turn adversity to account, to make past pain an instrument of present wisdom. All things in lower nature either answer their purpose perfectly as they are, or struggle onwards in gradual development to its accomplishment. She alone who is the crown and archetype of nature wilfully stands in her own light, and perpetuates her own and man's misery.

The purpose for which it is dispensed to us to be born into this world is twofold—the formation of noble character in the individual, and the furtherance of the race toward development of the true Humanity, the stature of the fulness of its own divinity. But the attainment of either of these objects of existence depends upon the part assigned to each being played by each and not shifted on to someone else's shoulders. It is folly, indeed, to refuse to learn from others, but it is worse than folly never to achieve anything oneself from which others may learn. He who does the first may be a self-punishing egoist, but he who defaults in the second is a cumberer of the ground. To dread being original, where originality means production of something beautiful or useful, is to shun humanity itself; and yet it is a patent fact that women as a class do systematically hide under a bushel whatever gifts they possess; or if they let them appear, it is with timidity and uncertainty, caused, not by a doubt whether what they originate be good of its kind—such hesitation is sometimes desirable—but as to what people will say, especially the people who lead to-day's fashions. There are plenty of brilliant original ideas to be found among women, even as society has made women; but there is a want of wholeness and consistency and moral sinew when these ideas come to be definitely put forward, which completely prevents them from forcing a place for themselves in the current of actual life. The reason I take to be that the head and the heart do not work together. The woman's heart is always trying to pull her aright; her poor addled head is always sending her wrong.

Yet, moreover, in speaking thus confidently of the inherent goodness of woman's heart, let it be clearly understood that I mean her *innate* feelings, not that mess of washy senti-

ments which has been inculcated upon her. These sentiments only too often follow the lead of the head, and render the woman to all intents and purposes little better than heartless.....I assure you this is no ugly phantom of my own conjuring up; I speak from personal knowledge, from what I have actually seen of respectable and so-called religious women; and if the majority here can plead not guilty to any charge of this sort, I cannot but think that the chief reason is because they have never been tempted. Often have I myself known the male as unwilling to let himself down to the depth of feminine heartlessness as he is unable, on the other hand, to rise to the heights of feminine goodness; often have I known her who is born the Saviour of mankind, and the form of heaven, trying in vain to eradicate all truthfulness and tenderness from the heart of him who is born in the opposite character and form. It is even so. One woman regards another simply as a weed which may be allowed to grow in peace so long as she herself does not happen to covet its place; when she does, it is to be torn thence by the root.* And who are these heartless supplanters, once more? Do they belong to the "dangerous classes," are they the companions of burglars and garotters? No; they are the very same persons whose lady *v.* gentleman conduct is in the most unexceptionable taste, and who, if you were to hint at a more natural and less selfish and one-sided code of sexual morality than the ecclesiastical one still in vogue, would display by countenance and gesture the very latest thing out in shocked modesty, or perhaps quote an apostle against you. Their reading of the duty towards one's neighbour, however, is so far original as to consist in this, that while a woman who takes a fancy to a man may rightfully lacerate another woman's deepest affections wholesale, and make the rest of her life miserable, she must still try to keep up appearances so far as attainment of the object will allow. Hearts may be broken, but Society must not be scandalised.

Think not that I am taking too much upon myself in censuring the frailties of others, while I of course have other frailties of my own that are doubtless quite as bad in their way. It is not your frailties, my friends, but rather your

* Dialogist Ish is haranguing a female audience from a platform. Let us hope that the consciences of most of his hearers would acquit them of this bitter and sweeping charge.

fictitious virtues that I inveigh against. I will even go so far as to say that were it not for these rotten "virtues" of yours, your frailties would have remained mere momentary impulses, to be overcome the next moment by a better impulse. If only you had not been made such models of Christian behaviour, it is probable you would have attained something of real human worth, and the world would have been a step nearer toward the knowledge of what a woman can be.

This is no place to recur to the now well ventilated subject of sensual passions; but I cannot pass on without saying thus much, that so long as women think it their duty to cultivate flabbiness and imbecility under the names of delicacy and innocence, it is really they, the chaste ladies, who are accountable for whatever morbid abuses of the flesh may exist in the world.

* * * *

There are several morbid gratifications which are undoubtedly injurious; and it is for these, I say, that the whole race of women is to blame, just in proportion as they truckle to the depositaries of effete superstition, and submit to be locked up in the village pound of an ignorant and corrupt prudery.

Another matter which also makes the few champions of women's cause among our sex despair is the puny, febrile, baseless character of feminine resolution. To adduce an example: many a good essay or article has of late years been written in journals and periodicals by women on women's rights and duties; productions so able, so graceful and even scholarlike, so replete with combined sweetness and strength, as to show clearly how women might, if they chose, add in their own persons the divine presence and influence of womanhood to all those powers that are distinctly human in men. But only let a leading newspaper or other organ of public opinion print an illogical sour critique against the newly come forward champion of woman's liberty, reproving her in the old set terms and phrases of conventional pig-headedness, for want of modesty, &c., &c., and we almost invariably see the hopeful volunteer "subside into her boots," with apologetic explaining away and deprecation of censure, instead of gladly seizing the opportunity for an uncompromising and crushing reply.

What can be done for a class so destitute of back-bone that it allows its dearest wishes to be snubbed down by shallow critics, when it has, after all and in the last resort, *full power to enforce them?* Want of self-assertion and self-reliance in the face of public prejudice casts a not altogether undeserved discredit upon the quieter virtues of kindness and generosity which women exhibit so largely. A slave's virtues cannot be regarded quite as those of a freeman. They may proceed from spontaneous goodness, but the world is more likely to set them down as drilled habits or the results of weakness rather than strength, the products of compulsion and fear rather than of love. The courage of meek endurance may win approbation—especially from the oppressor, whose interest it suits, of course—but it does not win the great battles of life, it does not further mankind toward happiness and unity. On the contrary, were there no other virtues in the world than those which fashion stamps as the *Frauen-Zimmer* virtues, the ornamental qualities of the lady's bower—the state of modern society, bad as it is already, would then be far worse. Abject superstition overhead; narrow selfishness around, broken only by occasional idolatry of some favourite, the roc's egg of the season; thorns and briars of evil temper and suspicion and spiteful envy and hollow artifice and mean motives and "whatsoever loveth and maketh a lie," besetting every path underfoot—all that is noble and aspiring and progressive in these hard days of ours would be eliminated from life, and the peace of hell which hateth all understanding would have to be purchased by each one of us at the price of degradation to be helpless sloths or murderous reptiles before our time.

Another among the evil consequences of a false standard of honour set up in female society is the vulgar snobbish emulation of each class of social rank by that one just below it in the scale. Women, having been educated to frivolity, can seldom look upon works of any kind as honourable *in themselves*. They regard them as mere stepping-stones to personal distinction and social consideration, as instruments of mammon worship, to be cast aside when done with and to be kept as much in the background as possible while they are being used. Hence they do not care to excel in their several stations, but each must needs trespass on the station next above. For example, the maid-servant, having

no conception of any more solid mental pleasure, stints herself in the necessaries of health in order to buy a smart bonnet or cloak and make herself look as much of a "lady" as possible on Sundays and other holidays; often the unbecoming ill-assorted finery is a direct though bad imitation of something worn by her own mistress. Of course she has as much right to her own tastes as the mistress herself; but that is no reason why either should be frivolous. Then look at the mistress whom she apes. Probably she is a lady properly so called, but of inconsiderable fortune and therefore not justified in attempting the display, whether in dress or other matters, which her neighbour the nobleman's wife or large proprietress can make without sacrifice. But she must needs in her turn ape her titled or opulent neighbour and live at agony point in order to keep up a style which may make her seem to hold a different position from that she really does. And so on with each class in its way; each resolves on seeming what it is not; and so long as women act thus, is it to be expected that men should keep themselves free from the taint? Snobbishness, vulgarity, hollowness, heartlessness, whatever is greasy and unclean in polished morals will always remain prominent characteristics of our civilization, so long as our women have no worthier ambition than that of ephemeral peacock rivalry—a rivalry in which the successful competitor gains little that is real, except the spiteful envy and back-biting of the dear sisters she has outstripped in the discreditable race. I fear too that the women of England are more to blame than any others for the spreading of this social ulcer. However it may suit foreigners to have their jokes against England about this or that, it is none the less a fact patent enough to any one who will take the trouble to observe, that this country exercises a deeper influence upon the ideas of the epoch than any other in the world. This is not the place—nor do I profess to be historian or anthropologist enough—to inquire why it is so. What is more to the purpose is to ask whether we whose example is secretly so powerful abroad are taking care that that example shall be a good one. Are we endeavouring honestly to colonize the lands, so far as we may, with justice and truthfulness and humanity? Perhaps we are; but what success is the endeavour likely to have, while the very source of justice and rectitude and fellow-feeling remains by our own consent and act a poisoned spring? Bear this in mind, my

countrywomen: it is not merely the house or village or town you each inhabit, not merely your own small fidgeting and discontented circle, that suffers by your studied falsification of the name and nature of Woman; there is a great world outside upon which your lives collectively and individually work with occult but immense effect; and you are each responsible to a far greater extent than you have any notion of for the happiness or misery of entire mankind. If, then, you would not shrink from the task you are born into this world to fulfil, you must alter your course and cast aside your shams, though it be pain and grief to you; aye even if those shams constitute the whole of your present religion and nearly half of your present morality.

I would not, my hearers, that you should think I am too swayed by passion to form a just judgment on these matters. Nor am I conscious of ingratitude to the Past; I do not forget that what is worn out and worse than useless now, was once justly hailed as a deliverance and a blessing. But I do refuse to admit the doctrine that expedients which were good for a bye-gone age should necessarily hold good for the present age. For instance, both Christianity and Christian marriage have had their day. The Christian form of hero-worship was a step in the direction of anthropomorphism from the negative Judaism which was its immediate predecessor; and as regards old heathendom, Christianity was better than creeds which sanctioned human sacrifice and torture. And Christian marriage, no doubt, came as a boon to races of women liable to be bought and sold by the drove. But those times are gone, and we need not continue to apply the remedies which belonged to them; if we do, they become injuries instead of remedies, like a course of medicine which is still persisted in after its work in the body has long been done. Let us render the Past all the thanks due to it, and then bow it out of the door. We do not want it or its morals any longer; we are entering upon a different dispensation. We are getting up from all-fours upon our feet, and intend to walk without external props. We require no St. This or St. That to tell us our duty or supply us with canons of faith; the night of authority is past, the sunrise of rational liberty is at hand; the ungrown nations are beginning to foretaste their manhood, and they will not longer submit to be tied with the leading-strings of tradition. Let those who would so tie them beware; they

make the attempt at their peril. An irreversible fiat has gone forth against the old order of things. *Delenda est Carthago.*

It rests with you, women of our generation, to overcome the insanity of being ruled by a nightmare. You alone can remove the dreamy incubus of these false and hollow morals which have pinched and worried the masses of mankind until crime and cruelty became the inevitable outlets of suppressed heat; it rests with you to say, Let there be light; and the rays of liberty shall dart into every gloomy abode of scowling hatred and murderous violence and pining misery, turning the blackness of darkness into rainbow colours, and the poisonous reek of disease into the zephyr of rejuvenescent health. The philanthropists of centuries have essayed in vain what you can accomplish in a few years if you will; great men here and there have educated themselves by long and painful ordeals, and when their steel has been tempered at last, they have, in their own persons, withstood the pressure and shocks of the current, and have persuaded a sprinkling of lesser minds to stand by them as against it; but you have the power, if you choose, to turn the course of the current itself, so that vice will become difficult and virtue easy, not indeed in the distorted sense hitherto borne by those terms, but when virtue shall have come to mean something that benefits oneself and others, and vice the deliberate preference of morbid excitement to sound and healthful pleasures at hand. For, indeed, as things are yet, it may really be a question whether "virtue" is not, on the whole, a rather worse evil than vice. It rests with you, I say, to look back shortly from a position of dignity and beneficence upon these grey cold days through which we are passing, with a shudder at your former infatuation. Elevated to the divine throne, your birthplace, in matters spiritual, and set free to *live* instead of vegetating and wasting away mildewed, in matters mundane—you will then, for the first time in history, become sensible that a woman ought not to be merely a well-dressed female biped; that she exists for something more than to make a little show and a little fuss in a little place and then vanish.

Strike with a will, and you will soon find out the strength of your arm. You will soon find out what a pitiful weapon the alleged superior strength of men is against the fixed determination of woman to conquer by the power of sexual

fascination ; I mean, plainly, to reward those who will stand by and advance her social and other rights, and punish all those who oppose them, no matter how they stand related.* It is useless to disguise the fact that women can and must enforce their rights. To trust in the generosity of the essentially selfish is like waiting for the sun to rise in the west ; those who will have to be deposed for woman's elevation are not likely to yield but under compulsion. The day for that hope has passed ; the crisis of your destiny is at hand, and the reserve must be called up.

Thus you see, women of every stage and station in life, it is to your better nature and your higher faculties that I would appeal in order to awaken you to a sense of the evils you are fostering and to the ready modes of putting an end to them. But it is also my duty to show, that if you are determined to "keep the universal track which vain persons have trodden,"† vain will be found those tinsel defences of yours on which you rely for the conservation of a tinsel society ; your narrow prudishness, your regulated coyness, your paste-board dignity—not too dignified, however, to stoop to any meanness—your stereotyped recipes for catching eligible men in matrimonial toils, your creed that marriage is a woman's *summum bonum* to which she is to sacrifice every sound quality with which she was born ; vain, I repeat, will be these old bulwarks against the iron missiles ready to be hurled at them, when the victims of long imposture shall have found out the worthlessness of those in whose hard service they have groaned with unrewarded patience, and shall have risen like one man to shatter their chains and grind the forgers of them in the dust. You cannot win in such a struggle, but you can by thus taking the wrong side aggravate all the miseries it may engender.

It is, then, a practical question, female friends, which you are at this day called upon to determine—no mere philosophic speculation like the Sexual Symbol Theory, for example—but a vital matter which concerns this world rather than the other, at all events, in the first and foremost place. You

* This, of course, applies only to vindicating the rights of the female sex at large. The Dialogist does not mean that women would be justified in making the home unhappy for the sake of any mere private personal whim.

† הארה עולם תשמור אשר דרכו מתי און †

[Job xxii., 15.]

have to choose between two positions for your sex at large, and so for your individual selves as members of it, either of which positions wholly excludes the other.

By the one you will be emancipated from the long term of bondage which has dwarfed your minds and enervated your constitutions; you will be made to feel an independent dignity instead of the menial one of belonging to a husband—in theory at any rate—as a dog or horse might belong to you; you will take your equal share in that humanizing sense of responsibility which the holding a worthy office in the human commonwealth and in that of your own country begets; you will know what freedom means, that it is poor freedom to be physically at large without having the soul free from influences of superstition more imperious and wayward and hurtful than any tyrant's commands; and in this true freedom you will lift your heads up and away from gazing upon the footprints of some historic hero and expecting the empty shadow of his name to support you in the inevitable trials of life. You will become conscious of a power for good over all the departments of human—aye of animal—existence, very different from maudlin sentiment and impotent benevolence that wishes well but does nothing. You will see before you definite objects of a worthy ambition, which your own talents and energies may win without fear of being thwarted by bad laws and worse customs established by men in their selfishness as against you. It will be yours to command wars to cease in all the world, and nations to adjust their differences by arbitration, so that the miseries of wholesale maiming and bloodshed shall be counted among the horrors of vanished night; and crime under your wiser administration shall be reduced at all events from being an organized system into an occasional result of temporary passion. Above all, in this new position, your rightful place, you will be the recognized home and source of each nobler human aspiration, and everything great and good and beautiful that the whole world contains will be valued and admired in its relation to you. Your special pleasures will no longer be confounded with mere animal wants or with the coarseness of profane revelry; they will be understood as constituting that Holy Place which nothing unclean may come nigh. Thus known as the prime source and final end of every keen physical delight and the one worthy object of every sublime ideal ecstasy, at the same time the never-failing help and comfort

in what sorrow and darkness may still remain—the kingdoms of this world will have become the kingdoms of your mercy and truth meeting together, your righteousness and peace kissing each other. As the waters cover the sea, so will your knowledge cover the earth, its Saviour and Love and Life.

Turn now to the other side, the alternative position. According to this you will indolently suffer things to go on as they are, even if you do not actively strive to keep them so. As a matter of fact, you are no more able to prevent the great final consummation, the “one far off divine event to which the whole creation moves,” and which consists in the liberation and elevation of your sex, than you can stop the next comet. But it is easy to conjecture what disastrous results will accrue to yourselves in the meanwhile, if you persist in suffering for a bad cause through moral cowardice or perverse obstinacy. You will forfeit the good opinion of those whose admiration you evidently value more than self-respect; their affections and esteem being transferred to that class whom you make outcasts and despise. You will bring honesty and honour into discredit by showing that they who clamour for those principles are themselves hollow and vain; and narrow self-seeking will through your fault recommend itself as the only safe rule for the conduct of life. You will give a colouring of justice to the brutalities brutal men commit against their wives or other women, if they say, “It’s all very well to preach about conduct to women; but you’ll find, sir, if you try it, that to be kind to a woman is only to feed a snake to bite you.” By condescending to fight man, where you must or wish to fight him, with weapons more ignoble than his own, you will still insure, as you have hitherto done, the easy victory of his worse nature over his better and its yet more easy victory over you. By your contrivance the name of “old woman” will remain the contemptuous epithet it always has been, and that of young woman will only fare better because of the sensual gratifications attached to youth, sensual gratifications having no more of the spiritual in them, if so much, as the coition of beasts of the field. By this perversity of yours, misunderstanding, the cause of so much otherwise causeless hatred, will be perpetuated in the world, there being no common ground for the sympathy of diverse religions, philosophies and ethics; so that no new light will

ever be able to appear as light to all, nor will aught be meat for one soul without being poison for others ; conflict, conflict everywhere will be the normal state of the inhabitants of the earth, there being no judge to set the opponents right. Your rule will not be a rule of right, but of cunning inspired by malignity against each other ; and it will be constantly over-ruled by the decision of men whom you gratuitously make judges in their own cause. Discontent, beginning in your own hearts and homes, will grow louder and louder as it pervades all classes and expresses itself in various forms of unreason and disorder, until all are ready for an outbreak which will inundate the privileges of classes, and necessitate a painful reconstruction of society from its slowly settling foundations. Thus at every turn scorn and contumely will meet you ; the God of your faith will prove a liar, and the men you idolize will sneer at you and turn to those other women whom you set at naught. Heavenly aid a mockery, and trust in man a disappointment, there will remain for you no refuge but the hell of your own concocting, where womanhood and manhood melt away alike.

* * * *

Rouse yourselves, then, women, from your criminal supineness, and take your destiny into your own hands, and be truly women and not "dumb driven cattle" without the cattle's good qualities. The time is ripe for your united action ; action that is not united may accomplish a little, but not what the exigencies of the case demand. Make common cause for the assertion of your rights social, political, professional, and religious ; if assertion be not sufficient to obtain them, make common cause for coercion in that way you can coerce. Try and look at the matter seriously and act in it seriously ; do not treat it as a new sensation, which is to have a season's run and be done with, lest haply the next great season's sensation be one you will not like at all. Strive, above all things, to cast that slough of yours, that worst and most hideous part of undeveloped feminine character, your mutual jealousy and envy. When men are

jealous of each other—well, they are fools for their pains, and that is all; having no unborrowed spiritual worth, they cannot throw such away by misconduct. But you who have and are the very spiritual gold, and yet tarnish it by thwarting and hating one another, especially when you do this in reference to rivalry for the admiration of some particular man or men, are guilty of profaning the Sanctuary itself, so that they who approach it in order to be cleansed become but doubly defiled.

Rouse yourselves and doubt not your capacity to work out your own perfect regeneration and ours. The evidences of your capacity are plentiful, and are daily increasing, as a slightly more liberal education brings them out. No candid observer can fail to remark how, when a woman does take up a thing in good earnest, she accomplishes it with a finish and grace unattainable by men, though her work may as yet lack that weight and depth which a man derives from his advantageous mental training both of private study and of public association.

This training, then, is one of the things you have to insist upon, my friends, if you would choose the upward path; and there is now no middle course between going up and going down. The age is in a transition state; old landmarks are crumbling away, and new ones are not yet set up; the mariner has lost his former chart, and another is not provided for him; the light in the compass binnacle has gone out, and there is no pilot across the waves of this troublesome world. The portents of the latter day come thick upon us in the ever louder refusal on all sides to bow to the old *ipse dixit*; the spirit of independence is breaking out violently, and is only here and there moderated by breadth of view. International associations, trade unions, strikes, democratic forces of every kind, reasonable and unreasonable, are surging to the front; and though with Anglo-Saxon peoples they may rarely lead to serious riots, their operation is all the more sure for being comparatively steady and quiet. The so-called conservative section of society has not its heart in the defence of that which it defends; while the opposite party is not exactly certain what it is clamouring for, but would rather "go it blind" in the direction of any smash than stifle and stagnate longer under our fathers' *régime*.

Yours, women, yours alone is the healing hand that can allay all this fermentation; not, indeed, in the way of arrest-

ing the great changes that are to come about, but so as to prevent animosity and injustice between the classes affected by them, and all classes must be affected in their turn. Learning, in the first place, to look upon each other with different eyes from what has hitherto been, your first thought will not be that of shining at each other's expense, but of grouping together to form a beautiful and efficient whole. Here—in the mutual love of women—may be realised the enjoyment of passions neither degrading nor defiling. It may be, however, that *no such stimulant is needed* to awaken women to a sense of their mutual obligation; and in any case when once they are awakened, the keen wits heretofore so sharp to create and foster unworthy class jealousies and estrangement, will be as ready and able to cement cordiality and good understanding. Classes will not revile one another when each and all have felt the sweet feminine influence from each; bitterness will be short-lived as the hoar-frost melting before the morning sun. By the advent of woman's reign on earth as in heaven will then be realised what a contemporary poet has made the answer of Liberty—

“ Liberty ! what of the night ?
 I feel not the red rains fall ;
 Hear not the tempest at all,
 Nor thunder in heaven any more :
 All the distance is white
 With the soundless feet of the sun ;
 Night, with the woes that it wore
 Night is over and done.”*

The time for that great change is coming near, and those who refuse to join in the movement once fairly afoot, will simply be swept away by it. They will have to go in the same direction after all, only with a bad grace and without claim for consideration. They will be self-appointed martyrs in an utterly thankless cause, that can neither defend the ramparts of the past nor lay any foundation for the future. They will lose what they have and receive nothing in its stead, or nothing which they are able to appreciate. Ambition with them having proved a delusion and affection become a smouldering ruin, their latter-day judge will be their own heart, and one to pronounce their doom.

Women, can you hesitate between these opposite courses,

* Swinburne's "Songs before Sunrise." "A Watch in the Night."

the upward and the downward path? The voice of the age is rising loud around you, the looks of the age are growing fixed upon you; the decisive hour of your destiny is striking, and "it is a knell which summons you to heaven or hell." By all you hold most dear in this life and all you most hope for in worlds to come; by the loves you trust to continue, the griefs you wait to put away; by the noble ambitions, the refined tastes, the pure and properly human joys you would develop instead of losing; by everything which now or hereafter may constitute the happiness of you and yours—out of the deep we call to you to obliterate the disgrace of your woeful past, and no more to let the name of your sex be a jeer in the mouths of thoughtless men, a bye-word for what is weak and pitiful. You and you alone by your energy—your combined energy, undistracted by mean jealousies of each other—can at once make this world better and happier than it is, and can raise us all to a clearer insight and a firmer faith respecting what is to follow. On the other hand, you and you alone will be the responsible authors of greater anguish than mankind has yet endured, if you continue to prostitute yourselves to falsehood and its votaries, and idly fold your saving hands, and while cowering before the ills which your own apathy keeps alive, listlessly repeat silly commonplaces to the effect of saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace.

Choose ye this day whom ye will serve; the God whose express image ye are, and who in your persons only can be worshipped and loved; or that vain deluded "world" which has no personality but yet enough reality to continue what it has ever been, the means of your distortion and degradation and bitter wrongs and woe.

* * * *

There shall be quiet and safety for evermore among all the inhabitants of the earth, when she who is born; their perfection and crown, their God and Giver of Life, their Comforter, shall come to the knowledge of herself and her power, and shall arise and cast aside these unclean grave-clothes under whose weight she has lain so long. In that sunrise of everlasting peace shall the night of woe and discord be remembered no more; nation shall not rise up against nation, nor kingdom against kingdom; they shall not waste their precious substance any more in preparation for misery and blood. They shall not call bloodshed glory, nor make trophies of their fellow-creatures' pain, nor

be thoughtless and cruel toward the creatures below, although these, forsooth, had no kinship with us, no feelings as keen as ours. The sweet Holy Spirit of Woman, the Risen Saviour, shall lighten all dark and noisome corners of existence with such rays as it has nowhere yet shed. As for the old false gods with their fiendish creeds, they shall be as forgotten filth by the wayside; and the True God nigh, in recognition of Herself, shall never again stoop down to that reeking refuse, nor look away from her own sex for the joys of heaven.

Acknowledged universally as the physician of body and mind, their chief refuge and stay in trouble, their sole object of worship in health; as the only confessor to whom the heart's secrets may be laid bare, and in whose hand is the only power to absolve; as the healer and purifier and sanctifier, the dispenser of blessings and author of good, the rewarder of virtue and talent; as the main theme of science and philosophy, the final aim of art's highest ideals; as the source, end and eternal paragon of wisdom, beauty and love—to HER alone shall belong all praise, might, majesty, dominion and glory, in all worlds for ever and ever.