

RETHINKING THE WESTERN TRADITION

*A Vindication
of the Rights
of Woman*

Mary Wollstonecraft

Edited and with an Introduction by

EILEEN HUNT BOTTING

Contributors

Ruth Abbey

Eileen Hunt Botting

Norma Clarke

Madeline Cronin

and Virginia Sapiro

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Rethinking the Western Tradition

*The volumes in this series
seek to address the present debate
over the Western tradition
by reprinting key works of
that tradition along with essays
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Editor's Introduction

Reading Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the*

Rights of Woman, 1792–2014

EILEEN HUNT BOTTING

Born into a troubled middle-class family in the garment district of London, Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797) learned early that she would have to support not only herself but also others through her intellect and work ethic. Largely self-educated, she sought the tutelage of better-off friends, ministers, and neighbors in pursuing her youthful interest in theology, philosophy, and literature. She financially sustained her extended family through work as a lady's companion, schoolmistress, governess, and, finally, professional writer. She charted an unconventional path in love, marriage, and motherhood, which made her a controversial public symbol of the opportunities and pitfalls of female independence (Gordon 2005). Wollstonecraft overcame these life challenges to become the internationally renowned leading women's rights advocate of the late Enlightenment. She was also the first philosopher to pen a book-length defense of women's rights as a kind of human rights in the wake of the democratic debates of the French Revolution.

This landmark book—*A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (London: Joseph Johnson, 1792)—was well known in the British Isles, continental Europe, and the United States during the 1790s. It has continued to influence women's rights discourse and activism around the world. Nineteenth-century novelists, journalists, abolitionists, chartists, labor organizers, suffragists, socialists, anarchists, missionaries, and a variety of feminists found in the text a rich resource for their arguments and activism concerning the promotion of social justice for women (Kaplan 2002; Taylor 2003, 248; Botting 2013a).

Since the publication of the *Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft has become a major philosophical and personal icon of the cause of women's rights. In the mid- to late 1790s, however, two factors converged to inhibit public support for Wollstonecraft and her *Rights of Woman* in both Britain and America (Botting 2013b, 274). First, anti-Jacobin discourse—or anti-revolutionary discourse after the radical stage of the French Revolution—inundated countries that were enemies of the French republic, especially Britain and the United States under President John Adams. Because Wollstonecraft was a follower of the ideals of the French Revolution, she and her works were branded as Jacobin and portrayed to the general public as dangerous sources of political instability.

Second, William Godwin published his scandalous *Memoirs of the Author of "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman"* in London in 1798. Godwin intended the *Memoirs* to be a tribute to his wife's memory and philosophical legacy, capturing the whole of her complex life and work for posterity. Still in deep mourning, he composed the book within two months of her untimely death as a result of a childbirth infection in September 1797. The biographical transparency of the *Memoirs* hurt Wollstonecraft's posthumous reputation, however, because of its revelation of her "republican" (unofficial) marriage and illegitimate child with the American Gilbert Imlay during her residence in revolutionary France, and her premarital sexual relationship with Godwin soon thereafter in London. Scholars have argued that while the early reception of Wollstonecraft and the *Rights of Woman* in Britain and the United States was mixed but mainly positive, the publication of the shocking *Memoirs* soon sent her and her philosophy of women's rights into disrepute (Janes 1978, Thiébaux 1979, Brown 1995).

Although the anti-Jacobins in Britain and America used her unusual life and untimely death as a morality tale to illustrate the profligate path onto which equal rights would surely lead the sexes, Wollstonecraft continued to be read—often underground—by the leading progressive minds of the early nineteenth century on both sides of the Atlantic. In an 1843 letter to John Stuart Mill, the French positivist philosopher Auguste Comte divulged how reading Wollstonecraft shaped his early thinking on the relationship between the sexes during the late 1790s: "All thinkers who seriously like women as something more than pretty playthings have nowadays passed through a similar phase, I believe. In my turn, I well recall the time when the strange book of Miss Mary Wollstonecraft—written before she married Godwin—influenced me strongly" (Mill and Comte 1995, 188). Beyond such private browsing of her works, Wollstonecraft had a strong presence in the public spheres of the United States and continental Europe

in the first few decades of the nineteenth century. Up and down the eastern seaboard in 1818, American newspapers published a humorous piece on the right of women to wear “breeches”—signed, with droll comic effect, “Mary Wollstonecraft, Jr.” (Botting 2013b, 283).

Beginning in the late 1820s, there was a broad resurgence of public use of her name, ideas, and work, especially among women’s rights advocates. Her warm and steady reception in the United States grew even more enthusiastic, while it gained steam in continental Europe and Latin America. Her fame meant that her married name (“Mistriss Godwin”) could be used to market and sell a fake edition of her *Rights of Woman* in 1826 Paris, which was subsequently translated into Portuguese and published in three further editions in 1830s Brazil (Botting 2013a, 506–507).

However, her cooler homeland of Britain kept its distance from its most famous female philosopher. The legends of the scandals surrounding the Godwin-Shelley circle—including the suicide of Wollstonecraft’s firstborn daughter Fanny and the elopement of her younger daughter Mary to the married Percy Shelley—fueled British prejudices against experiments in expanding women’s freedom. This Victorian bias likely explains why John Stuart Mill, the author of *The Subjection of Women* (1869), never referenced Wollstonecraft despite his awareness of her influential work on women’s rights.

The centennial of the *Rights of Woman* was the occasion for several new editions and translations of the book, including those edited by leaders of national-level women’s movements, Millicent Fawcett of Britain and Bertha Pappenheim of Germany. Wollstonecraft’s struggles as an independent woman plus her visionary theory of universal human rights meant that she was quickly taken up as a source and symbol of the nascent feminist cause—by both critics and supporters alike—at the turn of the twentieth century. As the feminist historians Karen Offen and Nancy Cott have shown, the term “feminist” was invented in France around 1870 but soon became the global descriptive term for arguments and activism against patriarchy (or arbitrary male privilege) on behalf of the welfare of women as a group (Cott 1987, Offen 2000).

Early feminists from every school of thought—from the Russian émigré anarchist Emma Goldman, to the American anthropologist Ruth Benedict, to the British modernist novelist Virginia Woolf—found deep personal inspiration in Wollstonecraft’s singular life and egalitarian ideas, especially concerning sex, love, and marriage (Wexler 1981; Sapiro 1992, 6; Gordon 2005, 451). Even as new philosophical sources for feminism emerged during the movement’s second and third waves in the mid-to-late twentieth

century, Wollstonecraft has arguably remained the only thinker to be globally recognized as its philosophical founder. It is her groundbreaking book, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, which made her so.

Wollstonecraft's Philosophy of Universal Human Rights

Wollstonecraft's *Rights of Woman* is one of the few political or philosophical texts by a woman that is generally recognized as a classic of Western civilization. Her recent canonization in the fields of English literature and political theory—however liminal—is partly due to her own deep reading in these traditions. The *Rights of Woman* engaged the dramatic poetry of William Shakespeare and John Milton alongside the novels of Samuel Richardson and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. It built on the Dissenting Christian moral theology of Richard Price, the empirical epistemologies of John Locke and David Hume, the educational philosophies of Locke, Rousseau, Talleyrand-Périgord, and Catharine Macaulay, as well as Scottish Enlightenment theories of economic and political development. Fusing together these varied intellectual influences in her *Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft imbued the debates on the French Revolution with a visionary universalistic perspective on the rights of humans.

Wollstonecraft's grounding in Enlightenment-era debates about rights led her to develop one of the most original contributions to political theory in her time: the idea that women's rights are a kind of human rights. What we often take for granted—the idea of universal human rights undifferentiated by sex—was truly a radical idea in 1792. The most radical and influential aspect of Wollstonecraft's arguments for the rights of woman was their appeal to the humanity of women. Women's status as human beings was the grounding, or justification, for their entitlement to equal civil and political rights alongside men in modern republican governments. Wollstonecraft often referred to women as the degraded, oppressed, and politically marginalized “half of the human species” (48). With such rhetorical locutions, she reminded her audience of the artificial and arbitrary quality of women's social inequality with men. She also underscored the sexes' commonalities as members of the same species, and the moral desert of women to be recognized and respected as humans.

Wollstonecraft's appeal to human nature as a common ground for human rights claims was a theme of late eighteenth-century abolitionist discourse. Her 1790 treatise *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* had made such an argument for the right of chattel slaves to their liberation from

an “abominable” bondage: “But is it not consonant with justice, with the common principles of humanity, not to mention Christianity, to abolish this abominable mischief?” (Wollstonecraft 1989, 5:50–51). Like other British abolitionists such as her theological mentor, the Reverend Richard Price, Wollstonecraft understood her critique of chattel slavery as a logical application of the “principles” of Christianity—in particular, the idea that men and women were created as moral and rational equals in the image of God. She concluded her first political treatise with a resounding appeal to “the immutable attributes of God” as the metaphysical foundation for her conception of human equality and the human rights she derived from it (Wollstonecraft 1989, 5:60).

In the *Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft’s use of the species concept to argue for women’s human rights built on the *Rights of Men*’s abolitionist appeal to “the common principles of humanity.” Citing the slave-based colonial sugar trade as a severe instance of European racialized patriarchy, Wollstonecraft lamented how both women and African slaves existed only to “sweeten the cup of man” as instruments for white men’s power and pleasure: “Rousseau, and a numerous list of male writers, insist that she [woman] should all her life be subjected to a severe restraint, that of propriety. Why subject her to propriety—blind propriety, if she be capable of acting from a nobler spring, if she be an heir of immortality? Is sugar always to be produced by vital blood? Is one half of the human species, like the poor African slaves, to be subject to prejudices that brutalize them, when principles would be a surer guard, only to sweeten the cup of man?” (174).

By citing “prejudices” as the basis for oppression, both patriarchal and racial, Wollstonecraft underscored their historically contingent, socially constructed character. Akin to the chains of slaves, the “propriety” expected of women placed a “severe restraint” on their development as human beings: “They [women] are made slaves to their persons, and must render them alluring that man may lend them his reason to guide their tottering steps aright” (174). Women were encouraged to make their bodies weak and their personas demure so that men would keep and protect them like dependent children. In return, the women served as the metaphoric “slaves” of men in the biological reproduction of children and the cultural reproduction of feminine propriety.

Wollstonecraft, with this analogy, included all women in the category of patriarchal, gender-based oppression, since she described its victims as “one half of the human species.” This universalistic conception of women’s gender-based oppression gained its critical power from the severity of its comparative point of reference: chattel slavery. While chattel slaves

literally spilt their blood in the colonial sugar trade, women lost the chance to develop their full human potential through their subjection to men and the culture of feminine propriety. The abolitionist Wollstonecraft was concerned to liberate “one half of the human species” from arbitrary conditions of oppression, not downplay the severity of the oppression of slaves.

While earlier eighteenth-century feminist essays by Sophia, Condorcet, and de Gouges had also defended equal rights for the sexes, Wollstonecraft's 1792 treatise systematically addressed the philosophical question of why women's rights were a kind of human rights. Equally important, the *Rights of Woman* produced an influential rhetorical model for making such universalistic human rights arguments, which in turn generated an international feminist political idiom. Dedicating to Wollstonecraft's memory her 1799 *Letter to the Women of England, on the Injustice of Mental Subordination*, Mary Robinson archly queried, “Let me ask this plain and rational question—is not woman a human being, gifted with all the feelings that inhabit the bosom of man?” (1799, 2). This question would be answered affirmatively by hundreds of other readers of Wollstonecraft from around the world, so that by 1901, the historian Elvira Lopez of Argentina could describe the *Rights of Woman* as the founding text behind the internationalization of the modern feminist movement (1901, 168).

Wollstonecraft's arguments for women's rights as human rights in many ways overlap with the definitions of these terms in contemporary international human rights law. In June 1993, the United Nations' World Conference on Human Rights built on the growing international conception of women's rights as a kind of human rights. Produced from this conference, the Vienna Declaration used the term “human rights of women” in two interrelated ways. First, it meant women's shared rights with men—such as nourishment, safety, and education—and women's entitlement to equal access to these human rights, without gender discrimination. Second, it meant women's rights as human beings to be free from “gender-specific abuses” such as “murder, systematic rape, sexual slavery, and forced pregnancy,” as was tragically prevalent in “situations of armed conflict” (UN General Assembly 1993).

The *Rights of Woman* made a case for women's entitlement to both types of human rights. In the category of women's shared and equal rights with men, Wollstonecraft advocated universal primary education for children and uniform “civil and political rights” for adults (23).¹ In the category of women's human rights to be free from gender-specific abuses, she supported laws, economic policies, and deep cultural reforms that would prevent the exploitation of poor women as prostitutes,² reduce women's

desperate resort to abortion because of poverty or rape,³ analytically distinguish between rape (forced sex) and freely chosen sexual relations,⁴ counteract the spread of venereal disease,⁵ and eliminate the treatment of women as sexual and reproductive “slaves” within patriarchal marriages and societies as a whole. She specified women’s urgent need for an array of *positive* human rights tailored to address their gender’s complex predicament in both the short and long term: sex education, property ownership in marriage, employment beyond the family, divorce, and child custody.⁶ *Negative* human rights, such as the right *not* to be raped, were arguably even more crucial for women’s transcendence of their insidious form of gender-based oppression.⁷ With a deep irony that made the darkness of her enlightened century more visible, Wollstonecraft defended these different types of human rights for women—shared and equal, gender-specific, positive and negative—so that future generations of females would not be “born only to procreate and rot” (90).

Studying Wollstonecraft Today

The far-seeing quality of her philosophy has made Wollstonecraft’s *Rights of Woman* ripe for rediscovery by contemporary political theorists concerned with universal human rights, democratization, global justice, and human development. The Nobel laureate economist and human capabilities theorist Amartya Sen led the way with his *Development as Freedom* (1999). He upheld the *Rights of Woman* as a “classic book” which vindicated two vital forms of human rights for women: rights to well-being, and even more crucially, rights to be agents of their own course in life (Sen 1999, 189). In *Modern Social Imaginaries* (2004), the philosopher of modernity and culture Charles Taylor positioned Wollstonecraft as a pioneer in the “long march” toward democratic inclusion in the West, especially given her rethinking of the family in a “critical democratic-egalitarian light” (2004, 147). Sen’s *The Idea of Justice* (2009) presents the *Rights of Woman* as an argumentative model for empowering the marginalized to participate in democratic deliberation about justice. Following Wollstonecraft, the marginalized may effectively combine “wrath and reasoning” to make emotionally, intellectually, and politically compelling claims for human rights in the public sphere—thereby gaining a voice where they had been ignored before (Sen 2009, 392).

In the twenty-two years since the bicentennial of the *Rights of Woman*, there has been a renaissance of literary, historical, and political readings

of the book. In the first comprehensive treatment of Wollstonecraft's political theory—*A Vindication of Political Virtue* (1992)—Virginia Sapiro charted how Wollstonecraft's *Rights of Woman* and broader oeuvre were a complex product of the eighteenth-century republican tradition. According to the political scientist Sapiro's influential interpretation, Wollstonecraft blended the ancient Roman and Rousseauian concerns for popular self-government and strong community values with the Whig and Lockean concerns for individual natural rights and progressive social reform.

Led by the editorial work of Janet Todd and Marilyn Butler in their seven-volume *Works of Mary Wollstonecraft* (1989), scholars have been able to comprehensively study the development of Wollstonecraft's ideas over the course of her career. Comparing her early and more traditionally religious works such as *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787) with the Gothic realism of her posthumously published novel *Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman* (1798) has pushed scholars to recognize Wollstonecraft's shift toward a more "radical" kind of feminism near the end of her young life (Lorch 1990; Taylor 2003, 243). In Barbara Taylor's landmark work of intellectual history, *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination* (2003), Wollstonecraft emerges as a British radical whose Platonic Christian religiosity was never lost, but always animated her quest for social justice for women, chattel slaves, and the poor.

However labeled for its political ideas, the *Rights of Woman* is generally categorized as a treatise. From its early positive reviews in 1790s London literary journals, it has often been placed in the genre of educational theory (Janes 1978). This label is appropriate if educational reform is understood as a basis for Wollstonecraft's broader political project. After all, the penultimate chapter of the book contains an apparently unprecedented proposal to establish government-sponsored, free, public, coeducational, local, elementary day schools, for "rich and poor" children alike, as part of a modern republican society (199). She imagined the public policy as follows: "Day schools, for particular ages, should be established by the government, in which boys and girls might be educated together. The school for the younger children, from five to nine years of age, ought to be absolutely free and open to all classes" (198–199).

Nearly two centuries later, the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child similarly recognized free primary education as a universal human right of children. Remarkably, Wollstonecraft's plan for "national education" overlaps with the contemporary definition of universal primary education used by the United Nations in its second and third Millennium Development Goals: enabling all children, boys and girls, to com-

plete education from grades one through five (United Nations 2000; 198). A dozen years since the adoption of these goals, the United Nations has reported significant progress in realizing gender equity in primary education in developing countries, yet “ten million more girls than boys” remain out of primary school and “nearly two-thirds of the world’s 780 million people who cannot read are women” (UN Women 2012). As with Kant’s imagination of an international league of republics akin to the modern-day United Nations in his 1795 essay “Perpetual Peace,” Wollstonecraft’s 1792 demand for a universal human right to primary education remains farsighted in both theory and practice.

As her originality as a political theorist has been more broadly recognized, Wollstonecraft’s *Rights of Woman* and her earlier *Rights of Men* have been categorized as revolutionary models of women’s political writing. As Wendy Gunther-Canada emphasized, these treatises were Wollstonecraft’s first forays into the traditionally masculine genre of the political treatise (Gunther-Canada 2001). A resulting trend in contemporary readings of Wollstonecraft has been to distinguish her political treatises, and sometimes her philosophical history *An Historical and Moral View of the French Revolution* (1794), from the remainder of her oeuvre, which is seen as more autobiographical and literary. Wollstonecraft’s major autobiographical and literary works are generally understood to be *Mary, a Fiction* (1788), *Original Stories from Real Life* (1788), and *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796), as well as her posthumously published *Maria* and *Letters to Imlay* (1798). The integration of the study of the latter texts alongside her more explicitly political works is ongoing, and should yield further insights into her creativity as a writer who moved, strategically and artistically, across many genres.

For novelists, literary scholars, and feminists, Wollstonecraft’s blending of autobiography with both fiction and nonfiction has been an inspiration. Novels, plays, and poems based on her remarkable body of work and dramatic life story have been crafted since the mid-1790s. One of the earliest was John Colls’s 1795 “poetic epistle” in honor of her *Rights of Woman* and *French Revolution*: “Thus Wollstonecraft, by fiery genius led, / Entwines the laurel round the female’s head; / Contends with man for equal strength of mind, / And claims the rights estrang’d from womankind” (Colls 1795, 19).

As Norma Clarke traces in her essay for this volume, Wollstonecraft’s own literary works, especially *Maria*, influenced the political ideas of many women’s novels at the turn of the nineteenth century. Most significantly, her daughter Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818) pays homage

to the problems of human estrangement and neglect as found in *Maria's* tragic story of Jemima (Todd 1991). *Frankenstein* follows *Maria* in its provocative advocacy of fundamental human rights to recognition, respect, and parental care.

In current scholarship, there has been a shift from reading Wollstonecraft in the historical context of eighteenth-century republicanism and its discourse on civic virtue toward interpreting her philosophical contributions to virtue ethics (Taylor 2007, Berges 2011), theories of human rights and democracy (Halldenius 2007, O'Neill 2007), and conceptions of gender, sexuality, and the family (Abbey 1999, Tauchert 2002, Wingrove 2005). There has also been a turn toward reading Wollstonecraft in light of her religious foundations in the English Protestant theological tradition of rational Dissent, as in Ruth Abbey's essay for this volume (Hutton 2003, Taylor 2003). Wollstonecraft has been profitably compared with her esteemed philosophical predecessor and fellow English republican Catharine Macaulay on their egalitarian theories of moral virtue and education (Gunther-Canada 2003, Frazer 2008). Historians have situated the *Rights of Woman* against the backdrop of the longstanding *querelle des femmes*—or intellectual debate on the equality of the sexes—that took place in the aristocratic circles, Roman Catholic convents, and intellectual salons in modern Europe and its Latin American colonies (Mendoza 2007, O'Brien 2009, Ross 2009). The four new scholarly essays in this edition build on these trends by reading the *Rights of Woman* in terms of its contributions to human rights, women's writing, and feminist philosophy and activism.

Four New Readings of Wollstonecraft

Ruth Abbey's essay starts with the metaphysical foundations of Wollstonecraft's political theory. By assessing the theological arguments that undergird her universalistic account of human rights, Abbey reads Wollstonecraft as inaugurating the tradition of theorizing women's rights as a kind of human rights. Abbey examines the extent to which contemporary feminists from a variety of schools of thought, such as the radical Catharine MacKinnon and the liberal Martha Nussbaum, draw on Wollstonecraftian ideas.

Despite the fact that its Dissenting Christian metaphysics seems antiquated to most contemporary feminists and philosophers, the *Rights of Woman* continues to echo in contemporary ethics and political theory. Similarly to how Wollstonecraft derives human rights and duties from universal

“first principles” of human nature (especially the capacities for reason and moral virtue), feminist liberals such as Nussbaum and Sen have returned to naturalistic approaches to defining human rights in terms of universal human capabilities (such as practical reason and love) (37). In this vein, Abbey shows how Wollstonecraft’s ontology of the human being and optimistic theory of providential progress shape her perfectionistic ethics. Although most contemporary philosophers return to John Stuart Mill as a source for liberal theories of human development of moral virtues such as independence and responsibility, Abbey follows recent Wollstonecraft scholarship in rooting this school in the *Rights of Woman*. Abbey also builds on current attention to Wollstonecraft’s theology and religiosity to show how the metaphysical orientation of her virtue ethics undergirds her arguments for women’s human rights.

Norma Clarke’s essay situates Mary Wollstonecraft in the milieu of the late eighteenth-century London intelligentsia, especially the circle of women writers (of varying political persuasions) who were published by Joseph Johnson. Wollstonecraft was both supported by the existence of a community of women writers and stood at odds with them. She was one among a number of strong-minded, assertive women writers who, building on the successes of the English bluestockings, found public support as opinion-makers. The *Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft’s impassioned demand that women renounce their subordinate status and become full moral agents in the world, produced mixed responses. Many, like the evangelical Christian writer Hannah More, believed equally passionately that subordination (one of Dr. Samuel Johnson’s favorite words) was vital to an ordered society. After placing Wollstonecraft in the literary context of her time, Clarke discusses what she and her *Rights of Woman* came to mean for women writers and reformers as well as the emergent field of English literature in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

My essay builds on both Abbey and Clarke’s readings of the philosophical and literary legacies of the *Rights of Woman*. While Wollstonecraft’s rhetorical ingenuity has long been noted, her righteous and angry tone has sometimes obscured for her audiences her equally undeniable sense of humor. However dark in mood, her command of satire, sarcasm, irony, and understatement places Wollstonecraft among the great wits of the eighteenth century. Reading Wollstonecraft with an eye toward her dark humor, I show how she used wit to expose the moral problems with the patriarchal oppression of women, and to elicit public sympathy for the then laughable cause of women’s human rights. She also developed an innovative

first-person feminist voice, which enabled her to ground her arguments for women's human rights on her personal experiences of patriarchal oppression. By sympathetically identifying with the oppression of women in general—"O my sisters"—she turned her personal style of narration into a rhetorical model for the modern feminist movement (159). Through the first comparative study of the five introductions to centennial editions of the *Rights of Woman*, I show how thinkers from the United States, Britain, colonial South Africa, imperial Germany, and the Austrian-Hungarian empire similarly employed first-person narration to promote the idea of global female solidarity during the time that feminism was becoming an international social movement.

Continuing in this centuries-old tradition of understanding Wollstonecraft's life and writings as sources and models for later iterations of feminism, Virginia Sapiro's essay revisits her predecessor's well-known biography as an inspiration for her own intellectual development as a scholar of women and politics. Sapiro's biography of Wollstonecraft transitions into an autobiography of her own career in political science since she found a copy of the *Rights of Men* in the stacks of the University of Michigan library in the early 1970s. She offers a case of what Wollstonecraft argued would happen if women were granted the same rights as men in education, careers, and politics. Indeed, the *Rights of Woman* had proclaimed that women ought to "study politics" as part of their exercise of equal civil and political rights (177). As female intellectuals entered the fields of literature and the social sciences in greater numbers over the course of the twentieth century, Wollstonecraft was rediscovered as a personal and philosophical model for negotiating the norms of womanhood and women's rights in academia, the professions, and family life. Wollstonecraft's writings, as well as the many readings of her life's meaning, have become foundational texts upon which women and other marginalized groups have justified their presence and advancement in democratic politics as well as in fields of humanistic and scientific inquiry.

By focusing on the *Rights of Woman's* philosophical, literary, and political legacies, the four scholarly essays provide much-needed context for seeing why Wollstonecraft deserves an even firmer place in the Western canon. Students will appreciate the volume's scholarly guide to understanding why Wollstonecraft is as important to read as the political thinkers she engaged, such as Locke, Rousseau, and Burke. Feminists will find an up-to-date overview of Wollstonecraft and the *Rights of Woman's* signal contributions to their powerful global social movement. The volume's general emphasis on Wollstonecraft's impact on human rights theory and advocacy

will make it a helpful resource for students and scholars of democratization, development, and global justice.

Editorial Policy

With the assistance of the editorial staff at Yale University Press and four of my Glynn Family Honors Program students at the University of Notre Dame, I have reprinted the authoritative second (London) edition of the *Rights of Woman* published by Joseph Johnson. Wollstonecraft edited the second edition herself soon after the publication of the first edition in early 1792. The third London edition, though produced in her lifetime, was not authorized by Wollstonecraft and thus was not used as a source text (Hardt 1982).

To establish the text for the new edition, my Honors students Courtney Biscan, Lindsay Dun, John Gibbons, and Patrick Cruitt and I worked in pairs and proofed each other's editorial work on the second 1792 London edition in several rounds. We have corrected only a handful of minor mistakes in the original typesetting. We modernized archaic English spelling, mainly turning the eighteenth-century long "s" (which looks like "f") into the short "s" for the sake of readability. Otherwise, the text is the same as the public encountered it in late 1792. Wollstonecraft provided her own footnotes, which are reproduced verbatim. In order to preserve the feel of the book as Wollstonecraft last edited it, I have not added any further footnotes to the *Rights of Woman*.

New editorial annotations are confined to the scholarly apparatus that surrounds the text of the *Rights of Woman*. With the adept coauthorship of my doctoral student Madeline Cronin, I provide two historical timelines to frame the significance of Wollstonecraft and her book. One charts the life of Wollstonecraft and her family alongside the major political events from 1688 to 1818 (from England's Glorious Revolution to the publication of her daughter Mary Shelley's groundbreaking novel *Frankenstein*). The other timeline traces the place of the *Rights of Woman* in the "women's rights as human rights" tradition from 1739 to 2015 (from the publication of Sophia's *Woman not Inferior to Man* in London to the anticipated first year that Saudi Arabian women will exercise a limited right to suffrage).

Cronin has also contributed a biographical directory of the major philosophical, historical, and literary figures referenced in the *Rights of Woman*. The directory provides substantial background on each figure and their import within the book. We hope that these editorial features, alongside

the new set of interpretive essays by leading scholars of Wollstonecraft's life, thought, and legacies, will make this edition accessible to students yet helpful to experts. The careful reading of early versions of our essays by leading Wollstonecraft scholars Elizabeth Frazer, Lyndall Gordon, Anne Mellor, and Natalie Taylor enhanced our commentaries and kept them fresh and current. Finally, I owe a tremendous debt to the historian Mary Copeland for copyediting the entire scholarly apparatus to the volume.

NOTES

1. Her extended proposal for universal primary education (as well as more class-inflected forms of secondary education) is set forth over the course of chapter twelve of the *Rights of Woman*.
2. She decries both "common and legal prostitution," but especially the fate of those "poor and abandoned creatures" who are economically compelled to sell their bodies for the sexual gratification of their male clientele (177).
3. The destitute young servant Jemima's story of her desperate use of "the potion that was to procure abortion" after her expulsion from the home of the master who raped her is Wollstonecraft's most effective illustration of this moral problem. See Wollstonecraft, *Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman*, in *Works*, vol. 1, 112. She also speaks of the problem of women who "destroy the embryo in the womb" in the *Rights of Woman* (168).
4. In section I of chapter five of the *Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft critiques Rousseau's dangerous conflation of sex and rape with an evocative metaphor: if Rousseau is right that women are designed by nature to fulfill men's desire for forced sex, then women are chained to an "iron bed of fate" (106).
5. In chapter eight of the *Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft argues that the "promiscuous amours" of men produce "barrenness," miscarriage, and abandoned children, and strongly implies that their spread of "contagious" venereal disease is an underlying cause of such "destructive" social consequences (168).
6. For such positive human rights of women, see her proposals for girls' rights to a scientific form of sex education (151, 155, 199, 208), married women's rights to property ownership (177–178), and women's rights to employment beyond the home (177–178) in chapters seven, nine, and twelve of the *Rights of Woman*. Her novels *Mary, a Fiction* and *Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman* respectively confront the need for women's property rights in marriage and women's rights to divorce and custody of their children. See *Works*, vol. 1, 18–22, 179–181.
7. For an abstract analysis of the right not to be raped, see her critique of Rousseau in section I, chapter five of the *Rights of Woman* (105–107). Even more

powerful are her stories of women who experienced or averted rape, such as her protagonists Mary and Maria's resistance of forced sex in marriage (marital rape) and Jemima's suffering of rape by her master. In *Maria*, the eponymous heroine describes "personal intimacy without affection" as "the most painful state" for any woman. See *Works*, vol. 1, 26, 72, 112, 139.

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Text

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A
VINDICATION
OF THE
RIGHTS OF WOMAN:
WITH
STRICTURES
ON
POLITICAL AND MORAL SUBJECTS.

By MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT.

VOL. I.
THE SECOND EDITION.

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TO
M. TALLEYRAND-PÉRIGORD,
LATE BISHOP OF AUTUN.

SIR,

Having read with great pleasure a pamphlet which you have lately published, I dedicate this volume to you; to induce you to reconsider the subject, and maturely weigh what I have advanced respecting the rights of woman and national education: and I call with the firm tone of humanity; for my arguments, Sir, are dictated by a disinterested spirit—I plead for my sex—not for myself. Independence I have long considered as the grand blessing of life, the basis of every virtue—and independence I will ever secure by contracting my wants, though I were to live on a barren heath.

It is then an affection for the whole human race that makes my pen dart rapidly along to support what I believe to be the cause of virtue: and the same motive leads me earnestly to wish to see woman placed in a station in which she would advance, instead of retarding, the progress of those glorious principles that give a substance to morality. My opinion, indeed, respecting the rights and duties of woman, seems to flow so naturally from these simple principles, that I think it scarcely possible, but that some of the enlarged minds who formed your admirable constitution, will coincide with me.

In France there is undoubtedly a more general diffusion of knowledge than in any part of the European world, and I attribute it, in a great measure, to the social intercourse which has long subsisted between the sexes. It is true, I utter my sentiments with freedom, that in France the very essence of sensuality has been extracted to regale the voluptuary, and a kind of sentimental lust has prevailed, which, together with the system of duplicity that the whole tenour of their political and civil government taught, have given a sinister sort of sagacity to the French character, properly termed

finesse; from which naturally flow a polish of manners that injures the substance, by hunting sincerity out of society.—And, modesty, the fairest garb of virtue! has been more grossly insulted in France than even in England, till their women have treated as *prudish* that attention to decency, which brutes instinctively observe.

Manners and morals are so nearly allied that they have often been confounded; but, though the former should only be the natural reflection of the latter, yet, when various causes have produced factitious and corrupt manners, which are very early caught, morality becomes an empty name. The personal reserve, and sacred respect for cleanliness and delicacy in domestic life, which French women almost despise, are the graceful pillars of modesty; but, far from despising them, if the pure flame of patriotism have reached their bosoms, they should labour to improve the morals of their fellow citizens, by teaching men, not only to respect modesty in women, but to acquire it themselves, as the only way to merit their esteem.

Contending for the rights of woman, my main argument is built on this simple principle, that if she be not prepared by education to become the companion of man, she will stop the progress of knowledge and virtue; for truth must be common to all, or it will be inefficacious with respect to its influence on general practice. And how can woman be expected to co-operate unless she know why she ought to be virtuous? unless freedom strengthen her reason till she comprehend her duty, and see in what manner it is connected with her real good? If children are to be educated to understand the true principle of patriotism, their mother must be a patriot; and the love of mankind, from which an orderly train of virtues spring, can only be produced by considering the moral and civil interest of mankind; but the education and situation of woman, at present, shuts her out from such investigations.

In this work I have produced many arguments, which to me were conclusive, to prove that the prevailing notion respecting a sexual character was subversive of morality, and I have contended, that to render the human body and mind more perfect, chastity must more universally prevail, and that chastity will never be respected in the male world till the person of a woman is not, as it were, idolized, when little virtue or sense embellish it with the grand traces of mental beauty, or the interesting simplicity of affection.

Consider, Sir, dispassionately, these observations—for a glimpse of this truth seemed to open before you when you observed, “that to see one half of the human race excluded by the other from all participation of gov-

ernment, was a political phenomenon that, according to abstract principles, it was impossible to explain." If so, on what does your constitution rest? If the abstract rights of man will bear discussion and explanation, those of woman, by a parity of reasoning, will not shrink from the same test: though a different opinion prevails in this country, built on the very arguments which you use to justify the oppression of woman—prescription.

Consider, I address you as a legislator, whether, when men contend for their freedom, and to be allowed to judge for themselves respecting their own happiness, it be not inconsistent and unjust to subjugate women, even though you firmly believe that you are acting in the manner best calculated to promote their happiness? Who made man the exclusive judge, if woman partake with him the gift of reason?

In this style, argue tyrants of every denomination, from the weak king to the weak father of a family; they are all eager to crush reason; yet always assert that they usurp its throne only to be useful. Do you not act a similar part, when you *force* all women, by denying them civil and political rights, to remain immured in their families groping in the dark? for surely, Sir, you will not assert, that a duty can be binding which is not founded on reason? If indeed this be their destination, arguments may be drawn from reason: and thus augustly supported, the more understanding women acquire, the more they will be attached to their duty—comprehending it—for unless they comprehend it, unless their morals be fixed on the same immutable principle as those of man, no authority can make them discharge it in a virtuous manner. They may be convenient slaves, but slavery will have its constant effect, degrading the master and the abject dependent.

But, if women are to be excluded, without having a voice, from a participation of the natural rights of mankind, prove first, to ward off the charge of injustice and inconsistency, that they want reason—else this flaw in your NEW CONSTITUTION will ever shew that man must, in some shape, act like a tyrant, and tyranny, in whatever part of society it rears its brazen front, will ever undermine morality.

I have repeatedly asserted, and produced what appeared to me irrefragable arguments drawn from matters of fact, to prove my assertion, that women cannot, by force, be confined to domestic concerns; for they will, however ignorant, intermeddle with more weighty affairs, neglecting private duties only to disturb, by cunning tricks, the orderly plans of reason which rise above their comprehension.

Besides, whilst they are only made to acquire personal accomplishments, men will seek for pleasure in variety, and faithless husbands will

make faithless wives; such ignorant beings, indeed, will be very excusable when, not taught to respect public good, nor allowed any civil rights, they attempt to do themselves justice by retaliation.

The box of mischief thus opened in society, what is to preserve private virtue, the only security of public freedom and universal happiness?

Let there be then no coercion *established* in society, and the common law of gravity prevailing, the sexes will fall into their proper places. And, now that more equitable laws are forming your citizens, marriage may become more sacred: your young men may choose wives from motives of affection, and your maidens allow love to root out vanity.

The father of a family will not then weaken his constitution and debase his sentiments, by visiting the harlot, nor forget, in obeying the call of appetite, the purpose for which it was implanted. And, the mother will not neglect her children to practise the arts of coquetry, when sense and modesty secure her the friendship of her husband.

But, till men become attentive to the duty of a father, it is vain to expect women to spend that time in their nursery which they, "wise in their generation," choose to spend at their glass; for this exertion of cunning is only an instinct of nature to enable them to obtain indirectly a little of that power of which they are unjustly denied a share: for, if women are not permitted to enjoy legitimate rights, they will render both men and themselves vicious, to obtain illicit privileges.

I wish, Sir, to set some investigations of this kind afloat in France; and should they lead to a confirmation of my principles, when your constitution is revised the Rights of Woman may be respected, if it be fully proved that reason calls for this respect, and loudly demands JUSTICE for one half of the human race.

I am, SIR,

Yours respectfully,

M. W.

ADVERTISEMENT.

When I began to write this work, I divided it into three parts, supposing that one volume would contain a full discussion of the arguments which seemed to me to rise naturally from a few simple principles; but fresh illustrations occurring as I advanced, I now present only the first part to the public.

Many subjects, however, which I have cursorily alluded to, call for particular investigation, especially the laws relative to women, and the consideration of their peculiar duties. These will furnish ample matter for a second volume, which in due time will be published, to elucidate some of the sentiments, and complete many of the sketches begun in the first.

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INTRODUCTION.

After considering the historic page, and viewing the living world with anxious solicitude, the most melancholy emotions of sorrowful indignation have depressed my spirits, and I have sighed when obliged to confess, that either nature has made a great difference between man and man, or that the civilization which has hitherto taken place in the world has been very partial. I have turned over various books written on the subject of education, and patiently observed the conduct of parents and the management of schools; but what has been the result?—a profound conviction that the neglected education of my fellow-creatures is the grand source of the misery I deplore; and that women, in particular, are rendered weak and wretched by a variety of concurring causes, originating from one hasty conclusion. The conduct and manners of women, in fact, evidently prove that their minds are not in a healthy state; for, like the flowers which are planted in too rich a soil, strength and usefulness are sacrificed to beauty; and the flaunting leaves, after having pleased a fastidious eye, fade, disregarded on the stalk, long before the season when they ought to have arrived at maturity.—One cause of this barren blooming I attribute to a false system of education, gathered from the books written on this subject by men who, considering females rather as women than human creatures, have been more anxious to make them alluring mistresses than affectionate wives and rational mothers; and the understanding of the sex has been so bubbled by this specious homage, that the civilized women of the present century, with a few exceptions, are only anxious to inspire love, when they ought to cherish a nobler ambition, and by their abilities and virtues exact respect.

In a treatise, therefore, on female rights and manners, the works which have been particularly written for their improvement must not be overlooked; especially when it is asserted, in direct terms, that the minds of

women are enfeebled by false refinement; that the books of instruction, written by men of genius, have had the same tendency as more frivolous productions; and that, in the true style of Mahometanism, they are treated as a kind of subordinate beings, and not as a part of the human species, when improveable reason is allowed to be the dignified distinction which raises men above the brute creation, and puts a natural sceptre in a feeble hand.

Yet, because I am a woman, I would not lead my readers to suppose that I mean violently to agitate the contested question respecting the equality or inferiority of the sex; but as the subject lies in my way, and I cannot pass it over without subjecting the main tendency of my reasoning to misconstruction, I shall stop a moment to deliver, in a few words, my opinion.—In the government of the physical world it is observable that the female in point of strength is, in general, inferior to the male. This is the law of nature; and it does not appear to be suspended or abrogated in favour of woman. A degree of physical superiority cannot, therefore, be denied—and it is a noble prerogative! But not content with this natural pre-eminence, men endeavour to sink us still lower, merely to render us alluring objects for a moment; and women, intoxicated by the adoration which men, under the influence of their senses, pay them, do not seek to obtain a durable interest in their hearts, or to become the friends of the fellow creatures who find amusement in their society.

I am aware of an obvious inference:—from every quarter have I heard exclamations against masculine women; but where are they to be found? If by this appellation men mean to inveigh against their ardour in hunting, shooting, and gaming, I shall most cordially join in the cry; but if it be against the imitation of manly virtues, or, more properly speaking, the attainment of those talents and virtues, the exercise of which ennoble the human character, and which raise females in the scale of animal being, when they are comprehensively termed mankind;—all those who view them with a philosophic eye must, I should think, wish with me, that they may every day grow more and more masculine.

This discussion naturally divides the subject. I shall first consider women in the grand light of human creatures, who, in common with men, are placed on this earth to unfold their faculties; and afterwards I shall more particularly point out their peculiar designation.

I wish also to steer clear of an error which many respectable writers have fallen into; for the instruction which has hitherto been addressed to women, has rather been applicable to *ladies*, if the little indirect advice, that is scattered through Sandford and Merton, be excepted; but, addressing my

sex in a firmer tone, I pay particular attention to those in the middle class, because they appear to be in the most natural state. Perhaps the seeds of false-refinement, immorality, and vanity, have ever been shed by the great. Weak, artificial beings, raised above the common wants and affections of their race, in a premature unnatural manner, undermine the very foundation of virtue, and spread corruption through the whole mass of society! As a class of mankind they have the strongest claim to pity; the education of the rich tends to render them vain and helpless, and the unfolding mind is not strengthened by the practice of those duties which dignify the human character.—They only live to amuse themselves, and by the same law which in nature invariably produces certain effects, they soon only afford barren amusement.

But as I purpose taking a separate view of the different ranks of society, and of the moral character of women, in each, this hint is, for the present, sufficient; and I have only alluded to the subject, because it appears to me to be the very essence of an introduction to give a cursory account of the contents of the work it introduces.

My own sex, I hope, will excuse me, if I treat them like rational creatures, instead of flattering their *fascinating* graces, and viewing them as if they were in a state of perpetual childhood, unable to stand alone. I earnestly wish to point out in what true dignity and human happiness consists—I wish to persuade women to endeavour to acquire strength, both of mind and body, and to convince them that the soft phrases, susceptibility of heart, delicacy of sentiment, and refinement of taste, are almost synonymous with epithets of weakness, and that those beings who are only the objects of pity and that kind of love, which has been termed its sister, will soon become objects of contempt.

Dismissing then those pretty feminine phrases, which the men condescendingly use to soften our slavish dependence, and despising that weak elegance of mind, exquisite sensibility, and sweet docility of manners, supposed to be the sexual characteristics of the weaker vessel, I wish to show that elegance is inferior to virtue, that the first object of laudable ambition is to obtain a character as a human being, regardless of the distinction of sex; and that secondary views should be brought to this simple touchstone.

This is a rough sketch of my plan; and should I express my conviction with the energetic emotions that I feel whenever I think of the subject, the dictates of experience and reflection will be felt by some of my readers. Animated by this important object, I shall disdain to cull my phrases or polish my style;—I aim at being useful, and sincerity will render me unaffected; for, wishing rather to persuade by the force of my arguments,

than dazzle by the elegance of my language, I shall not waste my time in rounding periods, or in fabricating the turgid bombast of artificial feelings, which, coming from the head, never reach the heart.—I shall be employed about things, not words!—and, anxious to render my sex more respectable members of society, I shall try to avoid that flowery diction which has slid from essays into novels, and from novels into familiar letters and conversation.

These pretty superlatives, dropping glibly from the tongue, vitiate the taste, and create a kind of sickly delicacy that turns away from simple unadorned truth; and a deluge of false sentiments and overstretched feelings, stifling the natural emotions of the heart, render the domestic pleasures insipid, that ought to sweeten the exercise of those severe duties, which educate a rational and immortal being for a nobler field of action.

The education of women has, of late, been more attended to than formerly; yet they are still reckoned a frivolous sex, and ridiculed or pitied by the writers who endeavour by satire or instruction to improve them. It is acknowledged that they spend many of the first years of their lives in acquiring a smattering of accomplishments; meanwhile strength of body and mind are sacrificed to libertine notions of beauty, to the desire of establishing themselves,—the only way women can rise in the world,—by marriage. And this desire making mere animals of them, when they marry they act as such children may be expected to act:—they dress; they paint, and nickname God's creatures.—Surely these weak beings are only fit for a seraglio!—Can they be expected to govern a family with judgment, or take care of the poor babes whom they bring into the world?

If then it can be fairly deduced from the present conduct of the sex, from the prevalent fondness for pleasure which takes place of ambition and those nobler passions that open and enlarge the soul; that the instruction which women have hitherto received has only tended, with the constitution of civil society, to render them insignificant objects of desire—mere propagators of fools!—if it can be proved that in aiming to accomplish them, without cultivating their understandings, they are taken out of their sphere of duties, and made ridiculous and useless when the short-lived bloom of beauty is over,* I presume that *rational* men will excuse me for endeavouring to persuade them to become more masculine and respectable.

Indeed the word masculine is only a bugbear: there is little reason to fear that women will acquire too much courage or fortitude; for their apparent

*A lively writer, I cannot recollect his name, asks what business women turned of forty have to do in the world?

inferiority with respect to bodily strength, must render them, in some degree, dependent on men in the various relations of life; but why should it be increased by prejudices that give a sex to virtue, and confound simple truths with sensual reveries?

Women are, in fact, so much degraded by mistaken notions of female excellence, that I do not mean to add a paradox when I assert, that this artificial weakness produces a propensity to tyrannize, and gives birth to cunning, the natural opponent of strength, which leads them to play off those contemptible infantine airs that undermine esteem even whilst they excite desire. Let men become more chaste and modest, and if women do not grow wiser in the same ratio, it will be clear that they have weaker understandings. It seems scarcely necessary to say, that I now speak of the sex in general. Many individuals have more sense than their male relatives; and, as nothing preponderates where there is a constant struggle for an equilibrium, without it has naturally more gravity, some women govern their husbands without degrading themselves, because intellect will always govern.

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VINDICATION
OF THE
RIGHTS OF WOMAN.
PART I.

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CHAP. I.

THE RIGHTS AND INVOLVED DUTIES OF MANKIND CONSIDERED.

In the present state of society it appears necessary to go back to first principles in search of the most simple truths, and to dispute with some prevailing prejudice every inch of ground. To clear my way, I must be allowed to ask some plain questions, and the answers will probably appear as unequivocal as the axioms on which reasoning is built; though, when entangled with various motives of action, they are formally contradicted, either by the words or conduct of men.

In what does man's pre-eminence over the brute creation consist? The answer is as clear as that a half is less than the whole; in Reason.

What acquirement exalts one being above another? Virtue; we spontaneously reply.

For what purpose were the passions implanted? That man by struggling with them might attain a degree of knowledge denied to the brutes; whispers Experience.

Consequently the perfection of our nature and capability of happiness, must be estimated by the degree of reason, virtue, and knowledge, that distinguish the individual, and direct the laws which bind society: and that from the exercise of reason, knowledge and virtue naturally flow, is equally undeniable, if mankind be viewed collectively.

The rights and duties of man thus simplified, it seems almost impertinent to attempt to illustrate truths that appear so incontrovertible; yet such

deeply rooted prejudices have clouded reason, and such spurious qualities have assumed the name of virtues, that it is necessary to pursue the course of reason as it has been perplexed and involved in error, by various adventitious circumstances, comparing the simple axiom with casual deviations.

Men, in general, seem to employ their reason to justify prejudices, which they have imbibed, they can scarcely trace how, rather than to root them out. The mind must be strong that resolutely forms its own principles; for a kind of intellectual cowardice prevails which makes many men shrink from the task, or only do it by halves. Yet the imperfect conclusions thus drawn, are frequently very plausible, because they are built on partial experience, on just, though narrow, views.

Going back to first principles, vice skulks, with all its native deformity, from close investigation; but a set of shallow reasoners are always exclaiming that these arguments prove too much, and that a measure rotten at the core may be expedient. Thus expediency is continually contrasted with simple principles, till truth is lost in a mist of words, virtue, in forms, and knowledge rendered a sounding nothing, by the specious prejudices that assume its name.

That the society is formed in the wisest manner, whose constitution is founded on the nature of man, strikes, in the abstract, every thinking being so forcibly, that it looks like presumption to endeavour to bring forward proofs; though proof must be brought, or the strong hold of prescription will never be forced by reason; yet to urge prescription as an argument to justify the depriving men (or women) of their natural rights, is one of the absurd sophisms which daily insult common sense.

The civilization of the bulk of the people of Europe is very partial; nay, it may be made a question, whether they have acquired any virtues in exchange for innocence, equivalent to the misery produced by the vices that have been plastered over unsightly ignorance, and the freedom which has been bartered for splendid slavery. The desire of dazzling by riches, the most certain pre-eminence that man can obtain, the pleasure of commanding flattering sycophants, and many other complicated low calculations of doting self-love, have all contributed to overwhelm the mass of mankind, and make liberty a convenient handle for mock patriotism. For whilst rank and titles are held of the utmost importance, before which Genius "must hide its diminished head," it is, with a few exceptions, very unfortunate for a nation when a man of abilities, without rank or property, pushes himself forward to notice.—Alas! what unheard of misery have thousands suffered to purchase a cardinal's hat for an intriguing obscure adventurer, who

longed to be ranked with princes, or lord it over them by seizing the triple crown!

Such, indeed, has been the wretchedness that has flowed from hereditary honours, riches, and monarchy, that men of lively sensibility have almost uttered blasphemy in order to justify the dispensations of providence. Man has been held out as independent of his power who made him, or as a lawless planet darting from its orbit to steal the celestial fire of reason; and the vengeance of heaven, lurking in the subtle flame, like Pandora's pent up mischiefs, sufficiently punished his temerity, by introducing evil into the world.

Impressed by this view of the misery and disorder which pervaded society, and fatigued with jostling against artificial fools, Rousseau became enamoured of solitude, and, being at the same time an optimist, he labours with uncommon eloquence to prove that man was naturally a solitary animal. Misled by his respect for the goodness of God, who certainly— for what man of sense and feeling can doubt it!—gave life only to communicate happiness, he considers evil as positive, and the work of man; not aware that he was exalting one attribute at the expence of another, equally necessary to divine perfection.

Reared on a false hypothesis his arguments in favour of a state of nature are plausible, but unsound. I say unsound; for to assert that a state of nature is preferable to civilization, in all its possible perfection, is, in other words, to arraign supreme wisdom; and the paradoxical exclamation, that God has made all things right, and that error has been introduced by the creature, whom he formed, knowing what he formed, is as unphilosophical as impious.

When that wise Being who created us and placed us here, saw the fair idea, he willed, by allowing it to be so, that the passions should unfold our reason, because he could see that present evil would produce future good. Could the helpless creature whom he called from nothing break loose from his providence, and boldly learn to know good by practising evil, without his permission? No.—How could that energetic advocate for immortality argue so inconsistently? Had mankind remained for ever in the brutal state of nature, which even his magic pen cannot paint as a state in which a single virtue took root, it would have been clear, though not to the sensitive unreflecting wanderer, that man was born to run the circle of life and death, and adorn God's garden for some purpose which could not easily be reconciled with his attributes.

But if, to crown the whole, there were to be rational creatures produced, allowed to rise in excellence by the exercise of powers implanted for that

purpose; if benignity itself thought fit to call into existence a creature above the brutes,* who could think and improve himself, why should that inestimable gift, for a gift it was, if man was so created as to have a capacity to rise above the state in which sensation produced brutal ease, be called, in direct terms, a curse? A curse it might be reckoned, if the whole of our existence were bounded by our continuance in this world; for why should the gracious fountain of life give us passions, and the power of reflecting, only to embitter our days and inspire us with mistaken notions of dignity? Why should he lead us from love of ourselves to the sublime emotions which the discovery of his wisdom and goodness excites, if these feelings were not set in motion to improve our nature, of which they make a part,† and render us capable of enjoying a more godlike portion of happiness? Firmly persuaded that no evil exists in the world that God did not design to take place, I build my belief on the perfection of God.

Rousseau exerts himself to prove that all *was* right originally: a crowd of authors that all *is* now right: and I, that all will *be* right.

But, true to his first position, next to a state of nature, Rousseau celebrates barbarism, and apostrophizing the shade of Fabricius, he forgets that, in conquering the world, the Romans never dreamed of establishing their own liberty on a firm basis, or of extending the reign of virtue. Eager to support his system, he stigmatizes, as vicious, every effort of genius; and, uttering the apotheosis of savage virtues, he exalts those to demi-gods, who were scarcely human—the brutal Spartans, who, in defiance of justice and gratitude, sacrificed, in cold blood, the slaves who had shewn themselves heroes to rescue their oppressors.

Disgusted with artificial manners and virtues, the citizen of Geneva, instead of properly sifting the subject, threw away the wheat with the chaff,

*Contrary to the opinion of anatomists, who argue by analogy from the formation of the teeth, stomach, and intestines, Rousseau will not allow a man to be a carnivorous animal. And, carried away from nature by a love of system, he disputes whether man be a gregarious animal, though the long and helpless state of infancy seems to point him out as particularly impelled to pair, the first step towards herding.

†What would you say to a mechanic whom you had desired to make a watch to point out the hour of the day, if, to shew his ingenuity, he added wheels to make it a repeater, &c. that perplexed the simple mechanism; should he urge, to excuse himself—had you not touched a certain spring, you would have known nothing of the matter, and that he should have amused himself by making *an experiment* without doing you any harm: would you not retort fairly upon him, by insisting that if he had not added those needless wheels and springs, the accident could not have happened?

without waiting to inquire whether the evils which his ardent soul turned from indignantly, were the consequence of civilization or the vestiges of barbarism. He saw vice trampling on virtue, and the semblance of goodness taking place of the reality; he saw talents bent by power to sinister purposes, and never thought of tracing the gigantic mischief up to arbitrary power, up to the hereditary distinctions that clash with the mental superiority that naturally raises a man above his fellows. He did not perceive that regal power, in a few generations, introduces idiotism into the noble stem, and holds out baits to render thousands idle and vicious.

Nothing can set the regal character in a more contemptible point of view, than the various crimes that have elevated men to the supreme dignity.—Vile intrigues, unnatural crimes, and every vice that degrades our nature, have been the steps to this distinguished eminence; yet millions of men have supinely allowed the nerveless limbs of the posterity of such rapacious prowlers to rest quietly on their ensanguined thrones.*

What but a pestilential vapour can hover over society when its chief director is only instructed in the invention of crimes, or the stupid routine of childish ceremonies? Will men never be wise?—will they never cease to expect corn from tares, and figs from thistles?

It is impossible for any man, when the most favourable circumstances concur, to acquire sufficient knowledge and strength of mind to discharge the duties of a king, entrusted with uncontrolled power; how then must they be violated when his very elevation is an insuperable bar to the attainment of either wisdom or virtue; when all the feelings of a man are stifled by flattery, and reflection shut out by pleasure! Surely it is madness to make the fate of thousands depend on the caprice of a weak fellow creature, whose very station sinks him *necessarily* below the meanest of his subjects! But one power should not be thrown down to exalt another—for all power inebriates weak man; and its abuse proves that the more equality there is established among men, the more virtue and happiness will reign in society. But this and any similar maxim deduced from simple reason, raises an outcry—the church or the state is in danger, if faith in the wisdom of antiquity is not implicit; and they who, roused by the sight of human calamity, dare to attack human authority, are reviled as despisers of God, and enemies of man. These are bitter calumnies, yet they reached one of the best of men,[†] whose ashes still preach peace, and whose memory demands a respectful pause, when subjects are discussed that lay so near his heart.—

*Could there be a greater insult offered to the rights of man than the beds of justice in France, when an infant was made the organ of the detestable Dubois!

[†]Dr. Price.

After attacking the sacred majesty of Kings, I shall scarcely excite surprise by adding my firm persuasion that every profession, in which great subordination of rank constitutes its power, is highly injurious to morality.

A standing army, for instance, is incompatible with freedom; because subordination and rigour are the very sinews of military discipline; and despotism is necessary to give vigour to enterprizes that one will direct. A spirit inspired by romantic notions of honour, a kind of morality founded on the fashion of the age, can only be felt by a few officers, whilst the main body must be moved by command, like the waves of the sea; for the strong wind of authority pushes the crowd of subalterns forward, they scarcely know or care why, with headlong fury.

Besides, nothing can be so prejudicial to the morals of the inhabitants of country towns as the occasional residence of a set of idle superficial young men, whose only occupation is gallantry, and whose polished manners render vice more dangerous, by concealing its deformity under gay ornamental drapery. An air of fashion, which is but a badge of slavery, and proves that the soul has not a strong individual character, awes simple country people into an imitation of the vices, when they cannot catch the slippery graces, of politeness. Every corps is a chain of despots, who, submitting and tyrannizing without exercising their reason, become dead weights of vice and folly on the community. A man of rank or fortune, sure of rising by interest, has nothing to do but to pursue some extravagant freak; whilst the needy *gentleman*, who is to rise, as the phrase turns, by his merit, becomes a servile parasite or vile pander.

Sailors, the naval gentlemen, come under the same description, only their vices assume a different and a grosser cast. They are more positively indolent, when not discharging the ceremonials of their station; whilst the insignificant fluttering of soldiers may be termed active idleness. More confined to the society of men, the former acquire a fondness for humour and mischievous tricks; whilst the latter, mixing frequently with well-bred women, catch a sentimental cant.—But mind is equally out of the question, whether they indulge the horse-laugh, or polite simper.

May I be allowed to extend the comparison to a profession where more mind is certainly to be found; for the clergy have superior opportunities of improvement, though subordination almost equally cramps their faculties? The blind submission imposed at college to forms of belief serves as a novitiate to the curate, who must obsequiously respect the opinion of his rector or patron, if he mean to rise in his profession. Perhaps there cannot be a more forcible contrast than between the servile dependent gait of a

poor curate and the courtly mien of a bishop. And the respect and contempt they inspire render the discharge of their separate functions equally useless.

It is of great importance to observe that the character of every man is, in some degree, formed by his profession. A man of sense may only have a cast of countenance that wears off as you trace his individuality, whilst the weak, common man has scarcely ever any character, but what belongs to the body; at least, all his opinions have been so steeped in the vat consecrated by authority, that the faint spirit which the grape of his own vine yields cannot be distinguished.

Society, therefore, as it becomes more enlightened, should be very careful not to establish bodies of men who must necessarily be made foolish or vicious by the very constitution of their profession.

In the infancy of society, when men were just emerging out of barbarism, chiefs and priests, touching the most powerful springs of savage conduct, hope and fear, must have had unbounded sway. An aristocracy, of course, is naturally the first form of government. But, clashing interests soon losing their equipoise, a monarchy and hierarchy break out of the confusion of ambitious struggles, and the foundation of both is secured by feudal tenures. This appears to be the origin of monarchical and priestly power, and the dawn of civilization. But such combustible materials cannot long be pent up; and, getting vent in foreign wars and intestine insurrections, the people acquire some power in the tumult, which obliges their rulers to gloss over their oppression with a shew of right. Thus, as wars, agriculture, commerce, and literature, expand the mind, despots are compelled, to make covert corruption hold fast the power which was formerly snatched by open force.* And this baneful lurking gangrene is most quickly spread by luxury and superstition, the sure dregs of ambition. The indolent puppet of a court first becomes a luxurious monster, or fastidious sensualist, and then makes the contagion which his unnatural state spread, the instrument of tyranny.

It is the pestiferous purple which renders the progress of civilization a curse, and warps the understanding, till men of sensibility doubt whether the expansion of intellect produces a greater portion of happiness or misery. But the nature of the poison points out the antidote; and had Rousseau

*Men of abilities scatter seeds that grow up and have a great influence on the forming opinion; and when once the public opinion preponderates, through the exertion of reason, the overthrow of arbitrary power is not very distant.

mounted one step higher in his investigation, or could his eye have pierced through the foggy atmosphere, which he almost disdained to breathe, his active mind would have darted forward to contemplate the perfection of man in the establishment of true civilization, instead of taking his ferocious flight back to the night of sensual ignorance.

CHAP. II.

THE PREVAILING OPINION OF A SEXUAL CHARACTER DISCUSSED.

To account for, and excuse the tyranny of man, many ingenious arguments have been brought forward to prove, that the two sexes, in the acquirement of virtue, ought to aim at attaining a very different character: or, to speak explicitly, women are not allowed to have sufficient strength of mind to acquire what really deserves the name of virtue. Yet it should seem, allowing them to have souls, that there is but one way appointed by Providence to lead *mankind* to either virtue or happiness.

If then women are not a swarm of ephemeron triflers, why should they be kept in ignorance under the specious name of innocence? Men complain, and with reason, of the follies and caprices of our sex, when they do not keenly satirize our headstrong passions and groveling vices.—Behold, I should answer, the natural effect of ignorance! The mind will ever be unstable that has only prejudices to rest on, and the current will run with destructive fury when there are no barriers to break its force. Women are told from their infancy, and taught by the example of their mothers, that a little knowledge of human weakness, justly termed cunning, softness of temper, *outward* obedience, and a scrupulous attention to a puerile kind of propriety, will obtain for them the protection of man; and should they be beautiful, every thing else is needless, for, at least, twenty years of their lives.

Thus Milton describes our first frail mother; though when he tells us that women are formed for softness and sweet attractive grace, I cannot

comprehend his meaning, unless, in the true Mahometan strain, he meant to deprive us of souls, and insinuate that we were beings only designed by sweet attractive grace, and docile blind obedience, to gratify the senses of man when he can no longer soar on the wing of contemplation.

How grossly do they insult us who thus advise us only to render ourselves gentle, domestic brutes! For instance, the winning softness so warmly, and frequently, recommended, that governs by obeying. What childish expressions, and how insignificant is the being—can it be an immortal one? who will condescend to govern by such sinister methods! “Certainly,” says Lord Bacon, “man is of kin to the beasts by his body; and if he be not of kin to God by his spirit, he is a base and ignoble creature!” Men, indeed, appear to me to act in a very unphilosophical manner when they try to secure the good conduct of women by attempting to keep them always in a state of childhood. Rousseau was more consistent when he wished to stop the progress of reason in both sexes, for if men eat of the tree of knowledge, women will come in for a taste; but, from the imperfect cultivation which their understandings now receive, they only attain a knowledge of evil.

Children, I grant, should be innocent; but when the epithet is applied to men, or women, it is but a civil term for weakness. For if it be allowed that women were destined by Providence to acquire human virtues, and by the exercise of their understandings, that stability of character which is the firmest ground to rest our future hopes upon, they must be permitted to turn to the fountain of light, and not forced to shape their course by the twinkling of a mere satellite. Milton, I grant, was of a very different opinion; for he only bends to the indefeasible right of beauty, though it would be difficult to render two passages which I now mean to contrast, consistent. But into similar inconsistencies are great men often led by their senses.

To whom thus Eve with *perfect beauty* adorn'd.
 My Author and Disposer, what thou bidst
Unargued I obey; so God ordains;
 God is *thy law, thou mine*: to know no more
 Is Woman's *happiest* knowledge and her *praise*.

These are exactly the arguments that I have used to children; but I have added, your reason is now gaining strength, and, till it arrives at some degree of maturity, you must look up to me for advice—then you ought to *think*, and only rely on God.

Yet in the following lines Milton seems to coincide with me; when he makes Adam thus expostulate with his Maker.

Hast thou not made me here thy substitute,
 And these inferior far beneath me set?
 Among *unequals* what society
 Can sort, what harmony or true delight?
 Which must be mutual, in proportion due
 Giv'n and receiv'd; but in *disparity*
 The one intense, the other still remiss
 Cannot well suit with either, but soon prove
 Tedious alike: of *fellowship* I speak
 Such as I seek, fit to participate
 All rational delight—

In treating, therefore, of the manners of women, let us, disregarding sensual arguments, trace what we should endeavour to make them in order to co-operate, if the expression be not too bold, with the supreme Being.

By individual education, I mean, for the sense of the word is not precisely defined, such an attention to a child as will slowly sharpen the senses, form the temper, regulate the passions as they begin to ferment, and set the understanding to work before the body arrives at maturity; so that the man may only have to proceed, not to begin, the important task of learning to think and reason.

To prevent any misconstruction, I must add, that I do not believe that a private education can work the wonders which some sanguine writers have attributed to it. Men and women must be educated, in a great degree, by the opinions and manners of the society they live in. In every age there has been a stream of popular opinion that has carried all before it, and given a family character, as it were, to the century. It may then fairly be inferred, that, till society be differently constituted, much cannot be expected from education. It is, however, sufficient for my present purpose to assert, that, whatever effect circumstances have on the abilities, every being may become virtuous by the exercise of its own reason; for if but one being was created with vicious inclinations, that is positively bad, what can save us from atheism? or if we worship a God, is not that God a devil?

Consequently, the most perfect education, in my opinion, is such an exercise of the understanding as is best calculated to strengthen the body and form the heart. Or, in other words, to enable the individual to attain such habits of virtue as will render it independent. In fact, it is a farce to call any being virtuous whose virtues do not result from the exercise of its own reason. This was Rousseau's opinion respecting men: I extend it to women, and confidently assert that they have been drawn out of their

sphere by false refinement, and not by an endeavour to acquire masculine qualities. Still the regal homage which they receive is so intoxicating, that till the manners of the times are changed, and formed on more reasonable principles, it may be impossible to convince them that the illegitimate power, which they obtain, by degrading themselves, is a curse, and that they must return to nature and equality, if they wish to secure the placid satisfaction that unsophisticated affections impart. But for this epoch we must wait—wait, perhaps, till kings and nobles, enlightened by reason, and, preferring the real dignity of man to childish state, throw off their gaudy hereditary trappings: and if then women do not resign the arbitrary power of beauty—they will prove that they have *less* mind than man.

I may be accused of arrogance; still I must declare what I firmly believe, that all the writers who have written on the subject of female education and manners from Rousseau to Dr. Gregory, have contributed to render women more artificial, weak characters, than they would otherwise have been; and, consequently, more useless members of society. I might have expressed this conviction in a lower key; but I am afraid it would have been the whine of affectation, and not the faithful expression of my feelings, of the clear result, which experience and reflection have led me to draw. When I come to that division of the subject, I shall advert to the passages that I more particularly disapprove of, in the works of the authors I have just alluded to; but it is first necessary to observe, that my objection extends to the whole purport of those books, which tend, in my opinion, to degrade one half of the human species, and render women pleasing at the expense of every solid virtue.

Though, to reason on Rousseau's ground, if man did attain a degree of perfection of mind when his body arrived at maturity, it might be proper, in order to make a man and his wife *one*, that she should rely entirely on his understanding; and the graceful ivy, clasping the oak that supported it, would form a whole in which strength and beauty would be equally conspicuous. But, alas! husbands, as well as their helpmates, are often only overgrown children; nay, thanks to early debauchery, scarcely men in their outward form—and if the blind lead the blind, one need not come from heaven to tell us the consequence.

Many are the causes that, in the present corrupt state of society, contribute to enslave women by cramping their understandings and sharpening their senses. One, perhaps, that silently does more mischief than all the rest, is their disregard of order.

To do every thing in an orderly manner, is a most important precept, which women, who, generally speaking, receive only a disorderly kind of

education, seldom attend to with that degree of exactness that men, who from their infancy are broken into method, observe. This negligent kind of guess-work, for what other epithet can be used to point out the random exertions of a sort of instinctive common sense, never brought to the test of reason? prevents their generalizing matters of fact—so they do to-day, what they did yesterday, merely because they did it yesterday.

This contempt of the understanding in early life has more baneful consequences than is commonly supposed; for the little knowledge which women of strong minds attain, is, from various circumstances, of a more desultory kind than the knowledge of men, and it is acquired more by sheer observations on real life, than from comparing what has been individually observed with the results of experience generalized by speculation. Led by their dependent situation and domestic employments more into society, what they learn is rather by snatches; and as learning is with them, in general, only a secondary thing, they do not pursue any one branch with that persevering arduousness necessary to give vigour to the faculties, and clearness to the judgment. In the present state of society, a little learning is required to support the character of a gentleman; and boys are obliged to submit to a few years of discipline. But in the education of women, the cultivation of the understanding is always subordinate to the acquirement of some corporeal accomplishment; even while enervated by confinement and false notions of modesty, the body is prevented from attaining that grace and beauty which relaxed half-formed limbs never exhibit. Besides, in youth their faculties are not brought forward by emulation; and having no serious scientific study, if they have natural sagacity it is turned too soon on life and manners. They dwell on effects, and modifications, without tracing them back to causes; and complicated rules to adjust behaviour are a weak substitute for simple principles.

As a proof that education gives this appearance of weakness to females, we may instance the example of military men, who are, like them, sent into the world before their minds have been stored with knowledge or fortified by principles. The consequences are similar; soldiers acquire a little superficial knowledge, snatched from the muddy current of conversation, and, from continually mixing with society, they gain, what is termed a knowledge of the world; and this acquaintance with manners and customs has frequently been confounded with a knowledge of the human heart. But can the crude fruit of casual observation, never brought to the test of judgment, formed by comparing speculation and experience, deserve such a distinction? Soldiers, as well as women, practise the minor virtues with punctilious politeness. Where is then the sexual difference, when the

education has been the same? All the difference that I can discern, arises from the superior advantage of liberty, which enables the former to see more of life.

It is wandering from my present subject, perhaps, to make a political remark; but, as it was produced naturally by the train of my reflections, I shall not pass it silently over.

Standing armies can never consist of resolute, robust men; they may be well disciplined machines, but they will seldom contain men under the influence of strong passions, or with very vigorous faculties. And as for any depth of understanding, I will venture to affirm, that it is as rarely to be found in the army as amongst women; and the cause, I maintain, is the same. It may be further observed, that officers are also particularly attentive to their persons, fond of dancing, crowded rooms, adventures, and ridicule.* Like the *fair sex*, the business of their lives is gallantry.—They were taught to please, and they only live to please. Yet they do not lose their rank in the distinction of sexes, for they are still reckoned superior to women, though in what their superiority consists, beyond what I have just mentioned, it is difficult to discover.

The great misfortune is this, that they both acquire manners before morals, and a knowledge of life before they have, from reflection, any acquaintance with the grand ideal outline of human nature. The consequence is natural; satisfied with common nature, they become a prey to prejudices, and taking all their opinions on credit, they blindly submit to authority. So that, if they have any sense, it is a kind of instinctive glance, that catches proportions, and decides with respect to manners; but fails when arguments are to be pursued below the surface, or opinions analyzed.

May not the same remark be applied to women? Nay, the argument may be carried still further, for they are both thrown out of a useful station by the unnatural distinctions established in civilized life. Riches and hereditary honours have made cyphers of women to give consequence to the numerical figure; and idleness has produced a mixture of gallantry and despotism into society, which leads the very men who are the slaves of their mistresses to tyrannize over their sisters, wives, and daughters. This is only keeping them in rank and file, it is true. Strengthen the female mind by enlarging it, and there will be an end to blind obedience; but, as blind obedience is ever sought for by power, tyrants and sensualists are in the right when they endeavour to keep women in the dark, because the former only

*Why should women be censured with petulant acrimony, because they seem to have a passion for a scarlet coat? Has not education placed them more on a level with soldiers than any other class of men?

want slaves, and the latter a play-thing. The sensualist, indeed, has been the most dangerous of tyrants, and women have been duped by their lovers, as princes by their ministers, whilst dreaming that they reigned over them.

I now principally allude to Rousseau, for his character of Sophia is, undoubtedly, a captivating one, though it appears to me grossly unnatural; however it is not the superstructure, but the foundation of her character, the principles on which her education was built, that I mean to attack; nay, warmly as I admire the genius of that able writer, whose opinions I shall often have occasion to cite, indignation always takes place of admiration, and the rigid frown of insulted virtue effaces the smile of complacency, which his eloquent periods are wont to raise, when I read his voluptuous reveries. Is this the man, who, in his ardour for virtue, would banish all the soft arts of peace, and almost carry us back to Spartan discipline? Is this the man who delights to paint the useful struggles of passion, the triumphs of good dispositions, and the heroic flights which carry the glowing soul out of itself?—How are these mighty sentiments lowered when he describes the pretty foot and enticing airs of his little favourite! But, for the present, I waive the subject, and, instead of severely reprehending the transient effusions of overweening sensibility, I shall only observe, that whoever has cast a benevolent eye on society, must often have been gratified by the sight of humble mutual love, not dignified by sentiment, or strengthened by a union in intellectual pursuits. The domestic trifles of the day have afforded matters for cheerful converse, and innocent caresses have softened toils which did not require great exercise of mind or stretch of thought: yet, has not the sight of this moderate felicity excited more tenderness than respect? An emotion similar to what we feel when children are playing, or animals sporting,* whilst the contemplation of the noble struggles of suffering merit has raised admiration, and carried our thoughts to that world where sensation will give place to reason.

Women are, therefore, to be considered either as moral beings, or so weak that they must be entirely subjected to the superior faculties of men.

*Similar feelings has Milton's pleasing picture of paradisiacal happiness ever raised in my mind; yet, instead of envying the lovely pair, I have, with conscious dignity, or Satanic pride, turned to hell for sublimer objects. In the same style, when viewing some noble monument of human art, I have traced the emanation of the Deity in the order I admired, till, descending from that giddy height, I have caught myself contemplating the grandest of all human sights;—for fancy quickly placed, in some solitary recess, an outcast of fortune, rising superior to passion and discontent.

Let us examine this question. Rousseau declares that a woman should never, for a moment, feel herself independent, that she should be governed by fear to exercise her *natural* cunning, and made a coquetish slave in order to render her a more alluring object of desire, a *sweeter* companion to man, whenever he chooses to relax himself. He carries the arguments, which he pretends to draw from the indications of nature, still further, and insinuates that truth and fortitude, the corner stones of all human virtue, should be cultivated with certain restrictions, because, with respect to the female character, obedience is the grand lesson which ought to be impressed with unrelenting rigour.

What nonsense! when will a great man arise with sufficient strength of mind to puff away the fumes which pride and sensuality have thus spread over the subject! If women are by nature inferior to men, their virtues must be the same in quality, if not in degree, or virtue is a relative idea; consequently, their conduct should be founded on the same principles, and have the same aim.

Connected with man as daughters, wives, and mothers, their moral character may be estimated by their manner of fulfilling those simple duties; but the end, the grand end of their exertions should be to unfold their own faculties and acquire the dignity of conscious virtue. They may try to render their road pleasant; but ought never to forget, in common with man, that life yields not the felicity which can satisfy an immortal soul. I do not mean to insinuate, that either sex should be so lost in abstract reflections or distant views, as to forget the affections and duties that lie before them, and are, in truth, the means appointed to produce the fruit of life; on the contrary, I would warmly recommend them, even while I assert, that they afford most satisfaction when they are considered in their true, sober light.

Probably the prevailing opinion, that woman was created for man, may have taken its rise from Moses's poetical story; yet, as very few, it is presumed, who have bestowed any serious thought on the subject, ever supposed that Eve was, literally speaking, one of Adam's ribs, the deduction must be allowed to fall to the ground; or, only be so far admitted as it proves that man, from the remotest antiquity, found it convenient to exert his strength to subjugate his companion, and his invention to shew that she ought to have her neck bent under the yoke, because the whole creation was only created for his convenience or pleasure.

Let it not be concluded that I wish to invert the order of things; I have already granted, that, from the constitution of their bodies, men seem to be designed by Providence to attain a greater degree of virtue. I speak collectively of the whole sex; but I see not the shadow of a reason to conclude

that their virtues should differ in respect to their nature. In fact, how can they, if virtue has only one eternal standard? I must therefore, if I reason consequentially, as strenuously maintain that they have the same simple direction, as that there is a God.

It follows then that cunning should not be opposed to wisdom, little cares to great exertions, or insipid softness, varnished over with the name of gentleness, to that fortitude which grand views alone can inspire.

I shall be told that woman would then lose many of her peculiar graces, and the opinion of a well known poet might be quoted to refute my unqualified assertion. For Pope has said, in the name of the whole male sex,

Yet ne'er so sure our passion to create,
As when she touch'd the brink of all we hate.

In what light this sally places men and women, I shall leave to the judicious to determine; meanwhile I shall content myself with observing, that I cannot discover why, unless they are mortal, females should always be degraded by being made subservient to love or lust.

To speak disrespectfully of love is, I know, high treason against sentiment and fine feelings; but I wish to speak the simple language of truth, and rather to address the head than the heart. To endeavour to reason love out of the world, would be to out Quixote Cervantes, and equally offend against common sense; but an endeavour to restrain this tumultuous passion, and to prove that it should not be allowed to dethrone superior powers, or to usurp the sceptre which the understanding should ever coolly wield, appears less wild.

Youth is the season for love in both sexes; but in those days of thoughtless enjoyment provision should be made for the more important years of life, when reflection takes place of sensation. But Rousseau, and most of the male writers who have followed his steps, have warmly inculcated that the whole tendency of female education ought to be directed to one point:—to render them pleasing.

Let me reason with the supporters of this opinion who have any knowledge of human nature, do they imagine that marriage can eradicate the habitude of life? The woman who has only been taught to please will soon find that her charms are oblique sunbeams, and that they cannot have much effect on her husband's heart when they are seen every day, when the summer is passed and gone. Will she then have sufficient native energy to look into herself for comfort, and cultivate her dormant faculties? or, is it not more rational to expect that she will try to please other men; and, in the

emotions raised by the expectation of new conquests, endeavour to forget the mortification her love or pride has received? When the husband ceases to be a lover—and the time will inevitably come, her desire of pleasing will then grow languid, or become a spring of bitterness; and love, perhaps, the most evanescent of all passions, gives place to jealousy or vanity.

I now speak of women who are restrained by principle or prejudice; such women, though they would shrink from an intrigue with real abhorrence, yet, nevertheless, wish to be convinced by the homage of gallantry that they are cruelly neglected by their husbands; or, days and weeks are spent in dreaming of the happiness enjoyed by congenial souls till their health is undermined and their spirits broken by discontent. How then can the great art of pleasing be such a necessary study? it is only useful to a mistress; the chaste wife, and serious mother, should only consider her power to please as the polish of her virtues, and the affection of her husband as one of the comforts that render her task less difficult and her life happier.—But, whether she be loved or neglected, her first wish should be to make herself respectable, and not to rely for all her happiness on a being subject to like infirmities with herself.

The worthy Dr. Gregory fell into a similar error. I respect his heart; but entirely disapprove of his celebrated Legacy to his Daughters.

He advises them to cultivate a fondness for dress, because a fondness for dress, he asserts, is natural to them. I am unable to comprehend what either he or Rousseau mean, when they frequently use this indefinite term. If they told us that in a pre-existent state the soul was fond of dress, and brought this inclination with it into a new body, I should listen to them with a half smile, as I often do when I hear a rant about innate elegance.—But if he only meant to say that the exercise of the faculties will produce this fondness—I deny it.—It is not natural; but arises, like false ambition in men, from a love of power.

Dr. Gregory goes much further; he actually recommends dissimulation, and advises an innocent girl to give the lie to her feelings, and not dance with spirit, when gaiety of heart would make her feet eloquent without making her gestures immodest. In the name of truth and common sense, why should not one woman acknowledge that she can take more exercise than another? or, in other words, that she has a sound constitution; and why, to damp innocent vivacity, is she darkly to be told that men will draw conclusions which she little thinks of?—Let the libertine draw what inference he pleases; but, I hope, that no sensible mother will restrain the natural frankness of youth by instilling such indecent cautions. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh; and a wiser than Solomon

hath said, that the heart should be made clean, and not trivial ceremonies observed, which it is not very difficult to fulfil with scrupulous exactness when vice reigns in the heart.

Women ought to endeavour to purify their heart; but can they do so when their uncultivated understandings make them entirely dependent on their senses for employment and amusement, when no noble pursuit sets them above the little vanities of the day, or enables them to curb the wild emotions that agitate a reed over which every passing breeze has power? To gain the affections of a virtuous man is affectation necessary? Nature has given woman a weaker frame than man; but, to ensure her husband's affections, must a wife, who by the exercise of her mind and body whilst she was discharging the duties of a daughter, wife, and mother, has allowed her constitution to retain its natural strength, and her nerves a healthy tone, is she, I say, to condescend to use art and feign a sickly delicacy in order to secure her husband's affection? Weakness may excite tenderness, and gratify the arrogant pride of man; but the lordly caresses of a protector will not gratify a noble mind that pants for, and deserves to be respected. Fondness is a poor substitute for friendship!

In a seraglio, I grant, that all these arts are necessary; the epicure must have his palate tickled, or he will sink into apathy; but have women so little ambition as to be satisfied with such a condition? Can they supinely dream life away in the lap of pleasure, or the languor of weariness, rather than assert claim to pursue reasonable pleasures and render themselves conspicuous by practising the virtues which dignify mankind? Surely she has not an immortal soul who can loiter life away merely employed to adorn her person, that she may amuse the languid hours, and soften the cares of a fellow-creature who is willing to be enlivened by her smiles and tricks, when the serious business of life is over.

Besides, the woman who strengthens her body and exercises her mind will, by managing her family and practising various virtues, become the friend, and not the humble dependent of her husband; and if she, by possessing such substantial qualities, merit his regard, she will not find it necessary to conceal her affection, nor to pretend to an unnatural coldness of constitution to excite her husband's passions. In fact, if we revert to history, we shall find that the women who have distinguished themselves have neither been the most beautiful nor the most gentle of their sex.

Nature, or, to speak with strict propriety, God, has made all things right; but man has sought him out many inventions to mar the work. I now allude to that part of Dr. Gregory's treatise, where he advises a wife never to let her husband know the extent of her sensibility or affection. Voluptuous

precaution, and as ineffectual as absurd.—Love, from its very nature, must be transitory. To seek for a secret that would render it constant, would be as wild a search as for the philosopher's stone, or the grand panacea: and the discovery would be equally useless, or rather pernicious, to mankind. The most holy band of society is friendship. It has been well said, by a shrewd satirist, "that rare as true love is, true friendship is still rarer."

This is an obvious truth, and the cause not lying deep, will not elude a slight glance of inquiry.

Love, the common passion, in which chance and sensation take place of choice and reason, is, in some degree, felt by the mass of mankind; for it is not necessary to speak, at present, of the emotions that rise above or sink below love. This passion, naturally increased by suspense and difficulties, draws the mind out of its accustomed state, and exalts the affections; but the security of marriage, allowing the fever of love to subside, a healthy temperature is thought insipid, only by those who have not sufficient intellect to substitute the calm tenderness of friendship, the confidence of respect, instead of blind admiration, and the sensual emotions of fondness.

This is, must be, the course of nature.—friendship or indifference inevitably succeeds love.—And this constitution seems perfectly to harmonize with the system of government which prevails in the moral world. Passions are spurs to action, and open the mind; but they sink into mere appetites, become a personal and momentary gratification, when the object is gained, and the satisfied mind rests in enjoyment. The man who had some virtue whilst he was struggling for a crown, often becomes a voluptuous tyrant when it graces his brow; and, when the lover is not lost in the husband, the dotard, a prey to childish caprices, and fond jealousies, neglects the serious duties of life, and the caresses which should excite confidence in his children are lavished on the overgrown child, his wife.

In order to fulfil the duties of life, and to be able to pursue with vigour the various employments which form the moral character, a master and mistress of a family ought not to continue to love each other with passion. I mean to say, that they ought not to indulge those emotions which disturb the order of society, and engross the thoughts that should be otherwise employed. The mind that has never been engrossed by one object wants vigour—if it can long be so, it is weak.

A mistaken education, a narrow, uncultivated mind, and many sexual prejudices, tend to make women more constant than men; but, for the present, I shall not touch on this branch of the subject. I will go still further, and advance, without dreaming of a paradox, that an unhappy marriage is often very advantageous to a family, and that the neglected wife is, in

general, the best mother. And this would almost always be the consequence if the female mind were more enlarged: for, it seems to be the common dispensation of Providence, that what we gain in present enjoyment should be deducted from the treasure of life, experience; and that when we are gathering the flowers of the day and revelling in pleasure, the solid fruit of toil and wisdom should not be caught at the same time. The way lies before us, we must turn to the right or left; and he who will pass life away in bounding from one pleasure to another, must not complain if he acquire neither wisdom nor respectability of character.

Supposing, for a moment, that the soul is not immortal, and that man was only created for the present scene,—I think we should have reason to complain that love, infantine fondness, ever grew insipid and palled upon the sense. Let us eat, drink, and love, for to-morrow we die, would be, in fact, the language of reason, the morality of life; and who but a fool would part with a reality for a fleeting shadow? But, if awed by observing the improbable powers of the mind, we disdain to confine our wishes or thoughts to such a comparatively mean field of action; that only appears grand and important, as it is connected with a boundless prospect and sublime hopes, what necessity is there for falsehood in conduct, and why must the sacred majesty of truth be violated to detain a deceitful good that saps the very foundation of virtue? Why must the female mind be tainted by coquetish arts to gratify the sensualist, and prevent love from subsiding into friendship, or compassionate tenderness, when there are not qualities on which friendship can be built? Let the honest heart shew itself, and *reason* teach passion to submit to necessity; or, let the dignified pursuit of virtue and knowledge raise the mind above those emotions which rather imbitter than sweeten the cup of life, when they are not restrained within due bounds.

I do not mean to allude to the romantic passion, which is the concomitant of genius.—Who can clip its wing? But that grand passion not proportioned to the puny enjoyments of life, is only true to the sentiment, and feeds on itself. The passions which have been celebrated for their durability have always been unfortunate. They have acquired strength by absence and constitutional melancholy.—The fancy has hovered round a form of beauty dimly seen—but familiarity might have turned admiration into disgust; or, at least, into indifference, and allowed the imagination leisure to start fresh game. With perfect propriety, according to this view of things, does Rousseau make the mistress of his soul, Eloisa, love St. Preux, when life was fading before her; but this is no proof of the immortality of the passion.

Of the same complexion is Dr. Gregory's advice respecting delicacy of sentiment, which he advises a woman not to acquire, if she have determined

to marry. This determination, however, perfectly consistent with his former advice, he calls *indelicate*, and earnestly persuades his daughters to conceal it, though it may govern their conduct:—as if it were indelicate to have the common appetites of human nature.

Noble morality! and consistent with the cautious prudence of a little soul that cannot extend its views beyond the present minute division of existence. If all the faculties of woman's mind are only to be cultivated as they respect her dependence on man; if, when a husband be obtained, she have arrived at her goal, and meanly proud rests satisfied with such a paltry crown, let her grovel contentedly, scarcely raised by her employments above the animal kingdom; but, if, struggling for the prize of her high calling, she look beyond the present scene, let her cultivate her understanding without stopping to consider what character the husband may have whom she is destined to marry. Let her only determine, without being too anxious about present happiness, to acquire the qualities that ennoble a rational being, and a rough inelegant husband may shock her taste without destroying her peace of mind. She will not model her soul to suit the frailties of her companion, but to bear with them: his character may be a trial, but not an impediment to virtue.

If Dr. Gregory confined his remark to romantic expectations of constant love and congenial feelings, he should have recollected that experience will banish what advice can never make us cease to wish for, when the imagination is kept alive at the expence of reason.

I own it frequently happens that women who have fostered a romantic unnatural delicacy of feeling, waste their* lives in *imagining* how happy they should have been with a husband who could love them with a fervid increasing affection every day, and all day. But they might as well pine married as single—and would not be a jot more unhappy with a bad husband than longing for a good one. That a proper education; or, to speak with more precision, a well stored mind, would enable a woman to support a single life with dignity, I grant; but that she should avoid cultivating her taste, lest her husband should occasionally shock it, is quitting a substance for a shadow. To say the truth, I do not know of what use is an improved taste, if the individual be not rendered more independent of the casualties of life; if new sources of enjoyment, only dependent on the solitary operations of the mind, are not opened. People of taste, married or single, without distinction, will ever be disgusted by various things that touch not less observing minds. On this conclusion the argument must not be allowed

*For example, the herd of Novelists.

to hinge; but in the whole sum of enjoyment is taste to be denominated a blessing?

The question is, whether it procures most pain or pleasure? The answer will decide the propriety of Dr. Gregory's advice, and shew how absurd and tyrannic it is thus to lay down a system of slavery; or to attempt to educate moral beings by any other rules than those deduced from pure reason, which apply to the whole species.

Gentleness of manners, forbearance and long-suffering, are such amiable Godlike qualities, that in sublime poetic strains the Deity has been invested with them; and, perhaps, no representation of his goodness so strongly fastens on the human affections as those that represent him abundant in mercy and willing to pardon. Gentleness, considered in this point of view, bears on its front all the characteristics of grandeur, combined with the winning graces of condescension; but what a different aspect it assumes when it is the submissive demeanour of dependence, the support of weakness that loves, because it wants protection; and is forbearing, because it must silently endure injuries; smiling under the lash at which it dare not snarl. Abject as this picture appears, it is the portrait of an accomplished woman, according to the received opinion of female excellence, separated by specious reasoners from human excellence. Or, they* kindly restore the rib, and make one moral being of a man and woman; not forgetting to give her all the "submissive charms."

How women are to exist in that state where there is to be neither marrying nor giving in marriage, we are not told. For though moralists have agreed that the tenor of life seems to prove that *man* is prepared by various circumstances for a future state, they constantly concur in advising *woman* only to provide for the present. Gentleness, docility, and a spaniel-like affection are, on this ground, consistently recommended as the cardinal virtues of the sex; and, disregarding the arbitrary economy of nature, one writer has declared that it is masculine for a woman to be melancholy. She was created to be the toy of man, his rattle, and it must jingle in his ears whenever, dismissing reason, he chooses to be amused.

To recommend gentleness, indeed, on a broad basis is strictly philosophical. A frail being should labour to be gentle. But when forbearance confounds right and wrong, it ceases to be a virtue; and, however convenient it may be found in a companion—that companion will ever be considered as an inferior, and only inspire a vapid tenderness, which easily degenerates into contempt. Still, if advice could really make a being gentle,

*Vide Rousseau, and Swedenborg.

whose natural disposition admitted not of such a fine polish, something towards the advancement of order would be attained; but if, as might quickly be demonstrated, only affectation be produced by this indiscriminate counsel, which throws a stumbling-block in the way of gradual improvement, and true melioration of temper, the sex is not much benefited by sacrificing solid virtues to the attainment of superficial graces, though for a few years they may procure the individuals regal sway.

As a philosopher, I read with indignation the plausible epithets which men use to soften their insults; and, as a moralist, I ask what is meant by such heterogeneous associations, as fair defects, amiable weaknesses, &c? If there be but one criterion of morals, but one archetype for man, women appear to be suspended by destiny, according to the vulgar tale of Mahomet's coffin; they have neither the unerring instinct of brutes, nor are allowed to fix the eye of reason on a perfect model. They were made to be loved, and must not aim at respect, lest they should be hunted out of society as masculine.

But to view the subject in another point of view. Do passive indolent women make the best wives? Confining our discussion to the present moment of existence, let us see how such weak creatures perform their part? Do the women who, by the attainment of a few superficial accomplishments, have strengthened the prevailing prejudice, merely contribute to the happiness of their husbands? Do they display their charms merely to amuse them? And have women, who have early imbibed notions of passive obedience, sufficient character to manage a family or educate children? So far from it, that, after surveying the history of woman, I cannot help, agreeing with the severest satirist, considering the sex as the weakest as well as the most oppressed half of the species. What does history disclose but marks of inferiority, and how few women have emancipated themselves from the galling yoke of sovereign man?—So few, that the exceptions remind me of an ingenious conjecture respecting Newton: that he was probably a being of a superior order, accidentally caged in a human body. Following the same train of thinking, I have been led to imagine that the few extraordinary women who have rushed in eccentric directions out of the orbit prescribed to their sex, were *male* spirits, confined by mistake in female frames. But if it be not philosophical to think of sex when the soul is mentioned, the inferiority must depend on the organs; or the heavenly fire, which is to ferment the clay, is not given in equal portions.

But avoiding, as I have hitherto done, any direct comparison of the two sexes collectively, or frankly acknowledging the inferiority of woman, according to the present appearance of things, I shall only insist that men

have increased that inferiority till women are almost sunk below the standard of rational creatures. Let their faculties have room to unfold, and their virtues to gain strength, and then determine where the whole sex must stand in the intellectual scale. Yet let it be remembered, that for a small number of distinguished women I do not ask a place.

It is difficult for us purblind mortals to say to what height human discoveries and improvements may arrive when the gloom of despotism subsides, which makes us stumble at every step; but, when morality shall be settled on a more solid basis, then, without being gifted with a prophetic spirit, I will venture to predict that woman will be either the friend or slave of man. We shall not, as at present, doubt whether she is a moral agent, or the link which unites man with brutes. But, should it then appear, that like the brutes they were principally created for the use of man, he will let them patiently bite the bridle, and not mock them with empty praise; or, should their rationality be proved, he will not impede their improvement merely to gratify his sensual appetites. He will not, with all the graces of rhetoric, advise them to submit implicitly their understanding to the guidance of man. He will not, when he treats of the education of women, assert that they ought never to have the free use of reason, nor would he recommend cunning and dissimulation to beings who are acquiring, in like manner as himself, the virtues of humanity.

Surely there can be but one rule of right, if morality has an eternal foundation, and whoever sacrifices virtue, strictly so called, to present convenience, or whose *duty* it is to act in such a manner, lives only for the passing day, and cannot be an accountable creature.

The poet then should have dropped his sneer when he says,

If weak women go astray,
The stars are more in fault than they.

For that they are bound by the adamant chain of destiny is most certain, if it be proved that they are never to exercise their own reason, never to be independent, never to rise above opinion, or to feel the dignity of a rational will that only bows to God, and often forgets that the universe contains any being but itself and the model of perfection to which its ardent gaze is turned, to adore attributes that, softened into virtues, may be imitated in kind, though the degree overwhelms the enraptured mind.

If, I say, for I would not impress by declamation when Reason offers her sober light, if they be really capable of acting like rational creatures, let them not be treated like slaves; or, like the brutes who are dependent on

the reason of man, when they associate with him; but cultivate their minds, give them the salutary, sublime curb of principle, and let them attain conscious dignity by feeling themselves only dependent on God. Teach them, in common with man, to submit to necessity, instead of giving, to render them more pleasing, a sex to morals.

Further, should experience prove that they cannot attain the same degree of strength of mind, perseverance, and fortitude, let their virtues be the same in kind, though they may vainly struggle for the same degree; and the superiority of man will be equally clear, if not clearer; and truth, as it is a simple principle, which admits of no modification, would be common to both. Nay, the order of society as it is at present regulated would not be inverted, for woman would then only have the rank that reason assigned her, and arts could not be practised to bring the balance even, much less to turn it.

These may be termed Utopian dreams.—Thanks to that Being who impressed them on my soul, and gave me sufficient strength of mind to dare to exert my own reason, till, becoming dependent only on him for the support of my virtue, I view, with indignation, the mistaken notions that enslave my sex.

I love man as my fellow; but his scepter, real, or usurped, extends not to me, unless the reason of an individual demands my homage; and even then the submission is to reason, and not to man. In fact, the conduct of an accountable being must be regulated by the operations of its own reason; or on what foundation rests the throne of God?

It appears to me necessary to dwell on these obvious truths, because females have been insulated, as it were; and, while they have been stripped of the virtues that should clothe humanity, they have been decked with artificial graces that enable them to exercise a short-lived tyranny. Love, in their bosoms, taking place of every nobler passion, their sole ambition to be fair, to raise emotion instead of inspiring respect; and this ignoble desire, like the servility in absolute monarchies, destroys all strength of character. Liberty is the mother of virtue, and if women be, by their very constitution, slaves, and not allowed to breathe the sharp invigorating air of freedom, they must ever languish like exotics, and be reckoned beautiful flaws in nature.

As to the argument respecting the subjection in which the sex has ever been held, it retorts on man. The many have always been enthralled by the few; and monsters, who scarcely have shewn any discernment of human excellence, have tyrannized over thousands of their fellow-creatures. Why have men of superiour endowments submitted to such degradation? For, is

it not universally acknowledged that kings, viewed collectively, have ever been inferior, in abilities and virtue, to the same number of men taken from the common mass of mankind—yet, have they not, and are they not still treated with a degree of reverence that is an insult to reason? China is not the only country where a living man has been made a God. *Men* have submitted to superior strength to enjoy with impunity the pleasure of the moment—*women* have only done the same, and therefore till it is proved that the courtier, who servilely resigns the birthright of a man, is not a moral agent, it cannot be demonstrated that woman is essentially inferior to man because she has always been subjugated.

Brutal force has hitherto governed the world, and that the science of politics is in its infancy, is evident from philosophers scrupling to give the knowledge most useful to man that determinate distinction.

I shall not pursue this argument any further than to establish an obvious inference that as sound politics diffuse liberty, mankind, including woman, will become more wise and virtuous.

CHAP. III.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

Bodily strength from being the distinction of heroes is now sunk into such unmerited contempt that men, as well as women, seem to think it unnecessary: the latter, as it takes from their feminine graces, and from that lovely weakness the source of their undue power; and the former, because it appears inimical to the character of a gentleman.

That they have both by departing from one extreme run into another, may easily be proved; but first it may be proper to observe, that a vulgar error has obtained a degree of credit, which has given force to a false conclusion, in which an effect has been mistaken for a cause.

People of genius have, very frequently, impaired their constitutions by study or careless inattention to their health, and the violence of their passions bearing a proportion to the vigour of their intellects, the sword's destroying the scabbard has become almost proverbial, and superficial observers have inferred from thence, that men of genius have commonly weak, or, to use a more fashionable phrase, delicate constitutions. Yet the contrary, I believe, will appear to be the fact; for, on diligent inquiry, I find that strength of mind has, in most cases, been accompanied by superior strength of body,—natural soundness of constitution,—not that robust tone of nerves and vigour of muscles, which arise from bodily labour, when the mind is quiescent, or only directs the hands.

Dr. Priestley has remarked, in the preface to his biographical chart, that the majority of great men have lived beyond forty-five. And, considering the thoughtless manner in which they have lavished their strength, when investigating a favourite science they have wasted the lamp of life, forgetful

of the midnight hour; or, when, lost in poetic dreams, fancy has peopled the scene, and the soul has been disturbed, till it shook the constitution, by the passions that meditation had raised; whose objects, the baseless fabric of a vision, faded before the exhausted eye, they must have had iron frames. Shakspeare never grasped the airy dagger with a nerveless hand, nor did Milton tremble when he led Satan far from the confines of his dreary prison.—These were not the ravings of imbecility, the sickly effusions of distempered brains; but the exuberance of fancy, that “in a fine phrenzy” wandering, was not continually reminded of its material shackles.

I am aware that this argument would carry me further than it may be supposed I wish to go; but I follow truth, and, still adhering to my first position, I will allow that bodily strength seems to give man a natural superiority over woman; and this is the only solid basis on which the superiority of the sex can be built. But I still insist, that not only the virtue, but the *knowledge* of the two sexes should be the same in nature, if not in degree, and that women, considered not only as moral, but rational creatures, ought to endeavour to acquire human virtues (or perfections) by the *same* means as men, instead of being educated like a fanciful kind of *half* being—one of Rousseau’s wild chimeras.*

*“Researches into abstract and speculative truths, the principles and axioms of sciences, in short, every thing which tends to generalize our ideas, is not the proper province of women; their studies should be relative to points of practice; it belongs to them to apply those principles which men have discovered; and it is their part to make observations, which direct men to the establishment of general principles. All the ideas of women, which have not the immediate tendency to points of duty, should be directed to the study of men, and to the attainment of those agreeable accomplishments which have taste for their object; for as to works of genius, they are beyond their capacity; neither have they sufficient precision or power of attention to succeed in sciences which require accuracy: and as to physical knowledge, it belongs to those only who are most active, most inquisitive; who comprehend the greatest variety of objects: in short, it belongs to those who have the strongest powers, and who exercise them most, to judge of the relations between sensible beings and the laws of nature. A woman who is naturally weak, and does not carry her ideas to any great extent, knows how to judge and make a proper estimate of those movements which she sets to work, in order to aid her weakness; and these movements are the passions of men. The mechanism she employs is much more powerful than ours; for all her levers move the human heart. She must have the skill to incline us to do every thing which her sex will not enable her to do herself, and which is necessary or agreeable to her; therefore she ought to study the mind of man thoroughly, not the mind of man in general, abstractedly, but the dispositions of those men to whom she is subject, either by the laws of her country or by the force of opinion. She should learn to penetrate into their real sentiments from their conversation, their actions, their looks, and gestures. She should also have the art, by her own conversation,

But, if strength of body be, with some shew of reason, the boast of men, why are women so infatuated as to be proud of a defect? Rousseau has furnished them with a plausible excuse, which could only have occurred to a man, whose imagination had been allowed to run wild, and refine on the impressions made by exquisite senses;—that they might, forsooth, have a pretext for yielding to a natural appetite without violating a romantic species of modesty, which gratifies the pride and libertinism of man.

Women, deluded by these sentiments, sometimes boast of their weakness, cunningly obtaining power by playing on the *weakness* of men; and they may well glory in their illicit sway, for, like Turkish bashaws, they have more real power than their masters: but virtue is sacrificed to temporary gratifications, and the respectability of life to the triumph of an hour.

Women, as well as despots, have now, perhaps, more power than they would have if the world, divided and subdivided into kingdoms and families, were governed by laws deduced from the exercise of reason; but in obtaining it, to carry on the comparison, their character is degraded, and licentiousness spread through the whole aggregate of society. The many become pedestal to the few. I, therefore, will venture to assert, that till women are more rationally educated, the progress of human virtue and improvement in knowledge must receive continual checks. And if it be granted that woman was not created merely to gratify the appetite of man, or to be the upper servant, who provides his meals and takes care of his linen, it must follow, that the first care of those mothers or fathers, who really attend to the education of females, should be, if not to strengthen the body, at least, not to destroy the constitution by mistaken notions of beauty and female excellence; nor should girls ever be allowed to imbibe the pernicious notion that a defect can, by any chemical process of reasoning, become an excellence. In this respect, I am happy to find, that the author of one of the most instructive books, that our country has produced for

actions, looks, and gestures, to communicate those sentiments which are agreeable to them, without seeming to intend it. Men will argue more philosophically about the human heart; but women will read the heart of man better than they. It belongs to women, if I may be allowed the expression, to form an experimental morality, and to reduce the study of man to a system. Women have most wit, men have most genius; women observe, men reason: from the concurrence of both we derive the clearest light and the most perfect knowledge, which the human mind is, of itself, capable of attaining. In one word, from hence we acquire the most intimate acquaintance, both with ourselves and others, of which our nature is capable; and it is thus that art has a constant tendency to perfect those endowments which nature has bestowed.—The world is the book of women.” *Rousseau’s Emilius*. I hope my readers still remember the comparison, which I have brought forward, between women and officers.

children, coincides with me in opinion; I shall quote his pertinent remarks to give the force of his respectable authority to reason.*

But should it be proved that woman is naturally weaker than man, whence does it follow that it is natural for her to labour to become still weaker than nature intended her to be? Arguments of this cast are an insult to common sense, and favour of passion. The *divine right* of husbands, like the divine right of kings, may, it is to be hoped, in this enlightened age, be contested without danger, and, though conviction may not silence many boisterous disputants, yet, when any prevailing prejudice is attacked, the wise will consider, and leave the narrow-minded to rail with thoughtless vehemence at innovation.

The mother, who wishes to give true dignity of character to her daughter, must, regardless of the sneers of ignorance, proceed on a plan diametrically opposite to that which Rousseau has recommended with all the deluding charms of eloquence and philosophical sophistry: for his eloquence

*A respectable old man gives the following sensible account of the method he pursued when educating his daughter. "I endeavoured to give both to her mind and body a degree of vigour, which is seldom found in the female sex. As soon as she was sufficiently advanced in strength to be capable of the lighter labours of husbandry and gardening, I employed her as my constant companion. Selene, for that was her name, soon acquired a dexterity in all these rustic employments, which I considered with equal pleasure and admiration. If women are in general feeble both in body and mind, it arises less from nature than from education. We encourage a vicious indolence and inactivity, which we falsely call delicacy; instead of hardening their minds by the severer principles of reason and philosophy, we breed them to useless arts, which terminate in vanity and sensuality. In most of the countries which I had visited, they are taught nothing of an higher nature than a few modulations of the voice, or useless postures of the body; their time is consumed in sloth or trifles, and trifles become the only pursuits capable of interesting them. We seem to forget, that it is upon the qualities of the female sex that our own domestic comforts and the education of our children must depend. And what are the comforts or the education which a race of beings, corrupted from their infancy, and unacquainted with all the duties of life, are fitted to bestow? To touch a musical instrument with useless skill, to exhibit their natural or affected graces to the eyes of indolent and debauched young men, to dissipate their husband's patrimony in riotous and unnecessary expences, these are the only arts cultivated by women in most of the polished nations I had seen. And the consequences are uniformly such as may be expected to proceed from such polluted sources, private misery and public servitude.

"But Selene's education was regulated by different views, and conducted upon severer principles; if that can be called severity which opens the mind to a sense of moral and religious duties, and most effectually arms it against the inevitable evils of life."

renders absurdities plausible, and his dogmatic conclusions puzzle, without convincing, those who have not ability to refute them.

Throughout the whole animal kingdom every young creature requires almost continual exercise, and the infancy of children, conformable to this intimation, should be passed in harmless gambols, that exercise the feet and hands, without requiring very minute direction from the head, or the constant attention of a nurse. In fact, the care necessary for self-preservation is the first natural exercise of the understanding, as little inventions to amuse the present moment unfold the imagination. But these wise designs of nature are counteracted by mistaken fondness or blind zeal. The child is not left a moment to its own direction, particularly a girl, and thus rendered dependent—dependence is called natural.

To preserve personal beauty, woman's glory! the limbs and faculties are cramped with worse than Chinese bands, and the sedentary life which they are condemned to live, whilst boys frolic in the open air, weakens the muscles and relaxes the nerves.—As for Rousseau's remarks, which have since been echoed by several writers, that they have naturally, that is from their birth, independent of education, a fondness for dolls, dressing, and talking—they are so puerile as not to merit a serious refutation. That a girl, condemned to sit for hours together listening to the idle chat of weak nurses, or to attend at her mother's toilet, will endeavour to join the conversation, is, indeed, very natural; and that she will imitate her mother or aunts, and amuse herself by adorning her lifeless doll, as they do in dressing her, poor innocent babe! is undoubtedly a most natural consequence. For men of the greatest abilities have seldom had sufficient strength to rise above the surrounding atmosphere; and, if the page of genius have always been blurred by the prejudices of the age, some allowance should be made for a sex, who, like kings, always see things through a false medium.

Pursuing these reflections, the fondness for dress, conspicuous in women, may be easily accounted for, without supposing it the result of a desire to please the sex on which they are dependent. The absurdity, in short, of supposing that a girl is naturally a coquette, and that a desire connected with the impulse of nature to propagate the species, should appear even before an improper education has, by heating the imagination, called it forth prematurely, is so unphilosophical, that such a sagacious observer as Rousseau would not have adopted it, if he had not been accustomed to make reason give way to his desire of singularity, and truth to a favourite paradox.

Yet thus to give a sex to mind was not very consistent with the principles of a man who argued so warmly, and so well, for the immortality of the soul.—But what a weak barrier is truth when it stands in the way of an hy-

pothesis! Rousseau respected—almost adored virtue—and yet he allowed himself to love with sensual fondness. His imagination constantly prepared inflammable fuel for his inflammable senses; but, in order to reconcile his respect for self-denial, fortitude, and those heroic virtues, which a mind like his could not coolly admire, he labours to invert the law of nature, and broaches a doctrine pregnant with mischief and derogatory to the character of supreme wisdom.

His ridiculous stories, which tend to prove that girls are *naturally* attentive to their persons, without laying any stress on daily example, are below contempt.—And that a little miss should have such a correct taste as to neglect the pleasing amusement of making O's, merely because she perceived that it was an ungraceful attitude, should be selected with the anecdotes of the learned pig.*

I have, probably, had an opportunity of observing more girls in their infancy than J. J. Rousseau—I can recollect my own feelings, and I have looked steadily around me; yet, so far from coinciding with him in opinion respecting the first dawn of the female character, I will venture to affirm, that a girl, whose spirits have not been damped by inactivity, or innocence tainted by false shame, will always be a romp, and the doll will never excite attention unless confinement allows her no alternative. Girls and boys, in short, would play harmlessly together, if the distinction of sex was not inculcated long before nature makes any difference.—I will go further, and affirm, as an indisputable fact, that most of the women, in the circle of my observation, who have acted like rational creatures, or shewn any vigour of intellect, have accidentally been allowed to run wild—as some of the elegant formers of the fair sex would insinuate.

The baneful consequences which flow from inattention to health during infancy, and youth, extend further than is supposed—dependence of body naturally produces dependence of mind; and how can she be a good wife or mother, the greater part of whose time is employed to guard against or endure sickness? Nor can it be expected that a woman will resolutely

*“I once knew a young person who learned to write before she learned to read, and began to write with her needle before she could use a pen. At first, indeed, she took it into her head to make no other letter than the O: this letter she was constantly making of all sizes, and always the wrong way. Unluckily, one day, as she was intent on this employment, she happened to see herself in the looking-glass; when, taking a dislike to the constrained attitude in which she sat while writing, she threw away her pen, like another Pallas, and determined against making the O any more. Her brother was also equally averse to writing: it was the confinement, however, and not the constrained attitude, that most disgusted him.”

endeavour to strengthen her constitution and abstain from enervating indulgencies, if artificial notions of beauty, and false descriptions of sensibility, have been early entangled with her motives of action. Most men are sometimes obliged to bear with bodily inconveniencies, and to endure, occasionally, the inclemency of the elements; but genteel women are, literally speaking, slaves to their bodies, and glory in their subjection.

I once knew a weak woman of fashion, who was more than commonly proud of her delicacy and sensibility, She thought a distinguishing taste and puny appetite the height of all human perfection, and acted accordingly.—I have seen this weak sophisticated being neglect all the duties of life, yet recline with self-complacency on a sofa, and boast of her want of appetite as a proof of delicacy that extended to, or, perhaps, arose from, her exquisite sensibility: for it is difficult to render intelligible such ridiculous jargon.—Yet, at the moment, I have seen her insult a worthy old gentlewoman, whom unexpected misfortunes had made dependent on her ostentatious bounty, and who, in better days, had claims on her gratitude. Is it possible that a human creature could have become such a weak and depraved being, if, like the Sybarites, dissolved in luxury, every thing like virtue had not been worn away, or never impressed by precept, a poor substitute, it is true, for cultivation of mind, though it serves as a fence against vice?

Such a woman is not a more irrational monster than some of the Roman emperors, who were depraved by lawless power. Yet, since kings have been more under the restraint of law, and the curb, however weak, of honour, the records of history are not filled with such unnatural instances of folly and cruelty, nor does the despotism that kills virtue and genius in the bud, hover over Europe with that destructive blast which desolates Turkey, and renders the men, as well as the soil, unfruitful.

Women are every where in this deplorable state; for, in order to preserve their innocence, as ignorance is courteously termed, truth is hidden from them, and they are made to assume an artificial character before their faculties have acquired any strength. Taught from their infancy that beauty is woman's sceptre, the mind shapes itself to the body, and, roaming round its gilt cage, only seeks to adorn its prison. Men have various employments and pursuits which engage their attention, and give a character to the opening mind; but women, confined to one, and having their thoughts constantly directed to the most insignificant part of themselves, seldom extend their views beyond the triumph of the hour. But were their understanding once emancipated from the slavery to which the pride and sensuality of man and their short-sighted desire, like that of dominion in tyrants, of present sway, has subjected them, we should probably read of their

weaknesses with surprise. I must be allowed to pursue the argument a little farther.

Perhaps, if the existence of an evil being were allowed, who, in the allegorical language of scripture, went about seeking whom he should devour, he could not more effectually degrade the human character than by giving a man absolute power.

This argument branches into various ramifications.—Birth, riches, and every extrinsic advantage that exalt a man above his fellows, without any mental exertion, sink him in reality below them. In proportion to his weakness, he is played upon by designing men, till the bloated monster has lost all traces of humanity. And that tribes of men, like flocks of sheep, should quietly follow such a leader, is a solecism that only a desire of present enjoyment and narrowness of understanding can solve. Educated in slavish dependence, and enervated by luxury and sloth, where shall we find men who will stand forth to assert the rights of man;—or claim the privilege of moral beings, who should have but one road to excellence? Slavery to monarchs and ministers, which the world will be long in freeing itself from, and whose deadly grasp stops the progress of the human mind, is not yet abolished.

Let not men then in the pride of power, use the same arguments that tyrannic kings and venal ministers have used, and fallaciously assert that woman ought to be subjected because she has always been so.—But, when man, governed by reasonable laws, enjoys his natural freedom, let him despise woman, if she do not share it with him; and, till that glorious period arrives, in descanting on the folly of the sex, let him not overlook his own.

Women, it is true, obtaining power by unjust means, by practising or fostering vice, evidently lose the rank which reason would assign them, and they become either abject slaves or capricious tyrants. They lose all simplicity, all dignity of mind, in acquiring power, and act as men are observed to act when they have been exalted by the same means.

It is time to effect a revolution in female manners—time to restore to them their lost dignity—and make them, as a part of the human species, labour by reforming themselves to reform the world. It is time to separate unchangeable morals from local manners.—If men be demi-gods—why let us serve them! And if the dignity of the female soul be as disputable as that of animals—if their reason does not afford sufficient light to direct their conduct whilst unerring instinct is denied—they are surely of all creatures the most miserable! and, bent beneath the iron hand of destiny, must submit to be a *fair defect* in creation. But to justify the ways of Providence respecting them, by pointing out some irrefragable reason for thus

making such a large portion of mankind accountable and not accountable, would puzzle the subtlest casuist.

The only solid foundation for morality appears to be the character of the supreme Being; the harmony of which arises from a balance of attributes;—and, to speak with reverence, one attribute seems to imply the *necessity* of another. He must be just, because he is wise, he must be good, because he is omnipotent. For to exalt one attribute at the expence of another equally noble and necessary, bears the stamp of the warped reason of man—the homage of passion. Man, accustomed to bow down to power in his savage state, can seldom divest himself of this barbarous prejudice, even when civilization determines how much superior mental is to bodily strength; and his reason is clouded by these crude opinions, even when he thinks of the Deity.—His omnipotence is made to swallow up, or preside over his other attributes, and those mortals are supposed to limit his power irreverently, who think that it must be regulated by his wisdom.

I disclaim that specious humility which, after investigating nature, stops at the author.—The High and Lofty One, who inhabiteth eternity, doubtless possesses many attributes of which we can form no conception; but reason tells me that they cannot clash with those I adore—and I am compelled to listen to her voice.

It seems natural for man to search for excellence, and either to trace it in the object that he worships, or blindly to invest it with perfection, as a garment. But what good effect can the latter mode of worship have on the moral conduct of a rational being? He bends to power; he adores a dark cloud, which may open a bright prospect to him, or burst in angry, lawless fury, on his devoted head—he knows not why. And, supposing that the Deity acts from the vague impulse of an undirected will, man must also follow his own, or act according to rules, deduced from principles which he disclaims as irreverent. Into this dilemma have both enthusiasts and cooler thinkers fallen, when they laboured to free men from the wholesome restraints which a just conception of the character of God imposes.

It is not impious thus to scan the attributes of the Almighty: in fact, who can avoid it that exercises his faculties? For to love God as the fountain of wisdom, goodness, and power, appears to be the only worship useful to a being who wishes to acquire either virtue or knowledge. A blind unsettled affection may, like human passions, occupy the mind and warm the heart, whilst, to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God, is forgotten. I shall pursue this subject still further, when I consider religion in a light opposite to that recommended by Dr. Gregory, who treats it as a matter of sentiment or taste.

To return from this apparent digression. It were to be wished that women would cherish an affection for their husbands, founded on the same principle that devotion ought to rest upon. No other firm base is there under heaven—for let them beware of the fallacious light of sentiment; too often used as a softer phrase for sensuality. It follows then, I think, that from their infancy women should either be shut up like eastern princes, or educated in such a manner as to be able to think and act for themselves.

Why do men halt between two opinions, and expect impossibilities? Why do they expect virtue from a slave, from a being whom the constitution of civil society has rendered weak, if not vicious?

Still I know that it will require a considerable length of time to eradicate the firmly rooted prejudices which sensualists have planted; it will also require some time to convince women that they act contrary to their real interest on an enlarged scale, when they cherish or affect weakness under the name of delicacy, and to convince the world that the poisoned source of female vices and follies, if it be necessary, in compliance with custom, to use synonymous terms in a lax sense, has been the sensual homage paid to beauty:—to beauty of features; for it has been shrewdly observed by a German writer, that a pretty woman, as an object of desire, is generally allowed to be so by men of all descriptions; whilst a fine woman, who inspires more sublime emotions by displaying intellectual beauty, may be overlooked or observed with indifference, by those men who find their happiness in the gratification of their appetites. I foresee an obvious retort—whilst man remains such an imperfect being as he appears hitherto to have been, he will, more or less, be the slave of his appetites; and those women obtaining most power who gratify a predominant one, the sex is degraded by a physical, if not by a moral necessity.

This objection has, I grant, some force; but while such a sublime precept exists, as, “be pure as your heavenly Father is pure”; it would seem that the virtues of man are not limited by the Being who alone could limit them; and that he may press forward without considering whether he steps out of his sphere by indulging such a noble ambition. To the wild billows it has been said, “thus far shalt thou go, and no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.” Vainly then do they beat and foam, restrained by the power that confines the struggling planets in their orbits, matter yields to the great governing Spirit.—But an immortal soul, not restrained by mechanical laws and struggling to free itself from the shackles of matter, contributes to, instead of disturbing, the order of creation, when, co-operating with the Father of spirits, it tries to govern itself by the invariable rule that, in a degree, before which our imagination faints, regulates the universe.

Besides, if women be educated for dependence; that is, to act according to the will of another fallible being, and submit, right or wrong, to power, where are we to stop? Are they to be considered as vicegerents allowed to reign over a small domain, and answerable for their conduct to a higher tribunal, liable to error?

It will not be difficult to prove that such delegates will act like men subjected by fear, and make their children and servants endure their tyrannical oppression. As they submit without reason, they will, having no fixed rules to square their conduct by, be kind, or cruel, just as the whim of the moment directs; and we ought not to wonder if sometimes, galled by their heavy yoke, they take a malignant pleasure in resting it on weaker shoulders.

But, supposing a woman, trained up to obedience, be married to a sensible man, who directs her judgment without making her feel the servility of her subjection, to act with as much propriety by this reflected light as can be expected when reason is taken at second hand, yet she cannot ensure the life of her protector; he may die and leave her with a large family.

A double duty devolves on her; to educate them in the character of both father and mother; to form their principles and secure their property. But, alas! she has never thought, much less acted for herself. She has only learned to please* men, to depend gracefully on them; yet, encumbered with children, how is she to obtain another protector—a husband to supply the place of reason? A rational man, for we are not treading on romantic ground, though he may think her a pleasing docile creature, will not choose

*“In the union of the sexes both pursue one common object, but not in the same manner. From their diversity in this particular, arises the first determinate difference between the moral relations of each. The one should be active and strong, the other passive and weak: it is necessary the one should have both the power and the will, and that the other should make little resistance.

This principle being established, it follows that woman is expressly formed to please the man: if the obligation be reciprocal also, and the man ought to please in his turn, it is not so immediately necessary: his great merit is in his power, and he pleases merely because he is strong. This, I must confess, is not one of the refined maxims of love; it is however, one of the laws of nature, prior to love itself.

If woman be formed to please and be subjected to man, it is her place, doubtless, to render herself agreeable to him, instead of challenging his passion. The violence of his desires depends on her charms; it is by means of these she should urge him to the exertion of those powers which nature hath given him. The most successful method of exciting them, is, to render such exertion necessary by resistance; as, in that case, self-love is added to desire, and the one triumphs in the victory which the other obliged to acquire. Hence arise the various modes of attack and defence between the sexes; the boldness of one sex and the timidity of the other; and, in

to marry a *family* for love, when the world contains many more pretty creatures. What is then to become of her? She either falls an easy prey to some mean fortune-hunter, who defrauds her children of their paternal inheritance, and renders her miserable; or becomes the victim of discontent and blind indulgence. Unable to educate her sons, or impress them with respect; for it is not a play on words to assert, that people are never respected, though filling an important station, who are not respectable; she pines under the anguish of unavailing impotent regret. The serpent's tooth enters into her very soul, and the vices of licentious youth bring her with sorrow, if not with poverty also, to the grave.

This is not an overcharged picture; on the contrary, it is a very possible case, and something similar must have fallen under every attentive eye.

I have, however, taken it for granted, that she was well-disposed, though experience shews, that the blind may as easily be led into a ditch as along the beaten road. But supposing, no very improbable conjecture, that a being only taught to please must still find her happiness in pleasing;—what an example of folly, not to say vice, will she be to her innocent daughters! The mother will be lost in the coquette, and, instead of making friends of her daughters, view them with eyes askance, for they are rivals—rivals more cruel than any other, because they invite a comparison, and drive her from the throne of beauty, who has never thought of a seat on the bench of reason.

It does not require a lively pencil, or the discriminating outline of a caricature, to sketch the domestic miseries and petty vices which such a mistress of a family diffuses. Still she only acts as a woman ought to act, brought up according to Rousseau's system. She can never be reproached for being masculine, or turning out of her sphere; nay, she may observe another of his grand rules, and, cautiously preserving her reputation free from spot, be reckoned a good kind of woman. Yet in what respect can she be termed good? She abstains, it is true, without any great struggle, from committing gross crimes; but how does she fulfil her duties? Duties!—in truth she has enough to think of to adorn her body and nurse a weak constitution.

With respect to religion, she never presumed to judge for herself, but conformed, as a dependent creature should, to the ceremonies of the church which she was brought up in, piously believing that wiser heads than her

a word, that bashfulness and modesty with which nature hath armed the weak, in order to subdue the strong."

Rousseau's Emilius.

I shall make no other comment on this ingenious passage, than just to observe, that it is the philosophy of lasciviousness.

own have settled that business:—and not to doubt is her point of perfection. She therefore pays her tythe of mint and cummin—and thanks her God that she is not as other women are. These are the blessed effects of a good education! These the virtues of man's help-mate!*

I must relieve myself by drawing a different picture.

Let fancy now present a woman with a tolerable understanding, for I do not wish to leave the line of mediocrity, whose constitution, strengthened by exercise, has allowed her body to acquire its full vigour; her mind, at the same time, gradually expanding itself to comprehend the moral duties of life, and in what human virtue and dignity consist.

Formed thus by the discharge of the relative duties of her station, she marries from affection, without losing sight of prudence, and looking beyond matrimonial felicity, she secures her husband's respect before it is necessary to exert mean arts to please him and feed a dying flame, which nature doomed to expire when the object became familiar, when friendship and forbearance take place of a more ardent affection.—This is the natural death of love, and domestic peace is not destroyed by struggles to prevent its extinction. I also suppose the husband to be virtuous; or she is still more in want of independent principles.

Fate, however, breaks this tie.—She is left a widow, perhaps, without a sufficient provision; but she is not desolate! The pang of nature is felt; but after time has softened sorrow into melancholy resignation, her heart turns to her children with redoubled fondness, and anxious to provide for them, affection gives a sacred heroic cast to her maternal duties. She thinks that not only the eye sees her virtuous efforts from whom all her comfort now must flow, and whose approbation is life; but her imagination, a little abstracted and exalted by grief, dwells on the fond hope that the eyes which her trembling hand closed, may still see how she subdues every wayward passion to fulfil the double duty of being the father as well as the mother of her children. Raised to heroism by misfortunes, she represses the first faint dawning of a natural inclination, before it ripens into love, and in the bloom of life forgets her sex—forgets the pleasure of an awakening pas-

*"O how lovely," exclaims Rousseau, speaking of Sophia, "is her ignorance! Happy is he who is destined to instruct her! She will never pretend to be the tutor of her husband, but will be content to be his pupil. Far from attempting to subject him to her taste, she will accommodate herself to his. She will be more estimable to him, than if she was learned: he will have a pleasure in instructing her." *Rousseau's Emilius*.

I shall content myself with simply asking, how friendship can subsist, when love expires, between the master his pupil?

sion, which might again have been inspired and returned. She no longer thinks of pleasing, and conscious dignity prevents her from priding herself on account of the praise which her conduct demands. Her children have her love, and her brightest hopes are beyond the grave, where her imagination often strays.

I think I see her surrounded by her children, reaping the reward of her care. The intelligent eye meets hers, whilst health and innocence smile on their chubby cheeks, and as they grow up the cares of life are lessened by their grateful attention. She lives to see the virtues which she endeavoured to plant on principles, fixed into habits, to see her children attain a strength of character sufficient to enable them to endure adversity without forgetting their mother's example.

The task of life thus fulfilled, she calmly waits for the sleep of death, and rising from the grave, may say—Behold, thou gavest me a talent—and here are five talents.

I wish to sum up what I have said in a few words, for I here throw down my gauntlet, and deny the existence of sexual virtues, not excepting modesty. For man and woman, truth, if I understand the meaning of the word, must be the same; yet the fanciful female character, so prettily drawn by poets and novelists, demanding the sacrifice of truth and sincerity, virtue becomes a relative idea, having no other foundation than utility, and of that utility men pretend arbitrarily to judge, shaping it to their own convenience.

Women, I allow, may have different duties to fulfil; but they are *human* duties, and the principles that should regulate the discharge of them, I sturdily maintain, must be the same.

To become respectable, the exercise of their understanding is necessary, there is no other foundation for independence of character; I mean explicitly to say that they must only bow to the authority of reason, instead of being the *modest* slaves of opinion.

In the superior ranks of life how seldom do we meet with a man of superior abilities, or even common acquirements? The reason appears to me clear, the state they are born in was an unnatural one. The human character has ever been formed by the employments the individual, or class, pursues; and if the faculties are not sharpened by necessity, they must remain obtuse. The argument may fairly be extended to women; for, seldom occupied by serious business, the pursuit of pleasure gives that insignificance to their character which renders the society of the *great* so insipid. The same want of firmness, produced by a similar cause, forces them both to fly from

themselves to noisy pleasures, and artificial passions, till vanity takes place of every social affection, and the characteristics of humanity can scarcely be discerned. Such are the blessings of civil governments, as they are at present organized, that wealth and female softness equally tend to debase mankind, and are produced by the same cause; but allowing women to be rational creatures, they should be incited to acquire virtues which they may call their own, for how can a rational being be ennobled by any thing that is not obtained by its *own* exertions?

CHAP. IV.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE STATE OF DEGRADATION TO WHICH WOMAN IS REDUCED BY VARIOUS CAUSES.

That woman is naturally weak, or degraded by a concurrence of circumstances, is, I think, clear. But this position I shall simply contrast with a conclusion, which I have frequently heard fall from sensible men in favour of an aristocracy: that the mass of mankind cannot be any thing, or the obsequious slaves, who patiently allow themselves to be driven forward, would feel their own consequence, and spurn their chains. Men, they further observe, submit every where to oppression, when they have only to lift up their heads to throw off the yoke; yet, instead of asserting their birth-right, they quietly lick the dust, and say, let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die. Women, I argue from analogy, are degraded by the same propensity to enjoy the present moment; and, at last, despise the freedom which they have not sufficient virtue to struggle to attain. But I must be more explicit.

With respect to the culture of the heart, it is unanimously allowed that sex is out of the question; but the line of subordination in the mental powers is never to be passed over.* Only “absolute in loveliness,” the portion

*Into what inconsistencies do men fall when they argue without the compass of principles. Women, weak women, are compared with angels; yet, a superiour order of beings should be supposed to possess more intellect than man; or, in what does their superiority consist? In the same strain, to drop the sneer, they are allowed to possess more goodness of heart, piety, and benevolence.—I doubt the fact, though

of rationality granted to woman, is, indeed, very scanty; for, denying her genius and judgment, it is scarcely possible to divine what remains to characterize intellect.

The stamen of immortality, if I may be allowed the phrase, is the perfectibility of human reason; for, were man created perfect, or did a flood of knowledge break in upon him, when he arrived at maturity, that precluded error, I should doubt whether his existence would be continued after the dissolution of the body. But, in the present state of things, every difficulty in morals that escapes from human discussion, and equally baffles the investigation of profound thinking, and the lightning glance of genius, is an argument on which I build my belief of the immortality of the soul. Reason is, consequentially, the simple power of improvement; or, more properly speaking, of discerning truth. Every individual is in this respect a world in itself. More or less may be conspicuous in one being than another; but the nature of reason must be the same in all, if it be an emanation of divinity, the tie that connects the creature with the Creator; for, can that soul be stamped with the heavenly image, that is not perfected by the exercise of its own reason?*

Yet outwardly ornamented with elaborate care, and so adorned to delight man, "that with honour he may love,"† the soul of woman is not allowed to have this distinction, and man, ever placed between her and reason, she is always represented as only created to see through a gross medium, and to take things on trust. But dismissing these fanciful theories, and considering woman as a whole, let it be what it will, instead of a part of man, the inquiry is whether she have reason or not. If she have, which, for a moment, I will take for granted, she was not created merely to be the solace of man, and the sexual should not destroy the human character.

Into this error men have, probably, been led by viewing education in a false light; not considering it as the first step to form a being advancing gradually towards perfection;‡ but only as a preparation for life. On this sensual error, for I must call it so, has the false system of female manners been reared, which robs the whole sex of its dignity, and classes the brown and fair with the smiling flowers that only adorn the land. This has ever

it be courteously brought forward, unless ignorance be allowed to be the mother of devotion; for I am firmly persuaded that, on an average, the proportion between virtue and knowledge, is more upon a par than is commonly granted.

*"The brutes," says Lord Monboddo, "remain in the state in which nature has placed them, except in so far as their natural instinct is improved by the culture we bestow upon them."

†Vide Milton.

‡This word is not strictly just, but I cannot find a better.

been the language of men, and the fear of departing from a supposed sexual character, has made even women of superior sense adopt the same sentiments.* Thus understanding, strictly speaking, has been denied to woman; and instinct, sublimated into wit and cunning, for the purposes of life, has been substituted in its stead.

The power of generalizing ideas, of drawing comprehensive conclusions from individual observations, is the only acquirement, for an immortal being, that really deserves the name of knowledge. Merely to observe, without endeavouring to account for any thing, may (in a very incomplete manner) serve as the common sense of life; but where is the store laid up that is to clothe the soul when it leaves the body?

This power has not only been denied to women; but writers have insisted that it is inconsistent, with a few exceptions, with their sexual character. Let men prove this, and I shall grant that woman only exists for man. I must, however, previously remark, that the power of generalizing ideas, to any great extent, is not common amongst men or women. But this exer-

*Pleasure's the portion of th' *inferior* kind;
But glory, virtue, Heaven for *man* design'd.

After writing these lines, how could Mrs. Barbauld write the following ignoble comparison?

To a Lady, with some painted flowers.

Flowers to the fair: to you these flowers I bring,
And strive to greet you with an earlier spring.
Flowers SWEET, and gay, and DELICATE LIKE YOU;
Emblems of innocence, and beauty too.
With flowers the Graces bind their yellow hair,
And flowery wreaths consenting lovers wear.
Flowers, the sole luxury which nature knew,
In Eden's pure and guiltless garden grew.
To loftier forms are rougher tasks assign'd;
The sheltering oak resists the stormy wind,
The tougher yew repels invading foes,
And the tall pine for future navies grows;
But this soft family, to cares unknown,
Were born for pleasure and delight ALONE.
Gay without toil, and lovely without art,
They spring to CHEER the sense, and GLAD the heart.
Nor blush, my fair, to own you copy these;
Your BEST, your SWEETEST empire is—PLEASE.

So the men tell us; but virtue, says reason, must be acquired by *rough* toils, and useful struggles with worldly *cares*.

cise is the true cultivation of the understanding; and every thing conspires to render the cultivation of the understanding more difficult in the female than the male world.

I am naturally led by this assertion to the main subject of the present chapter, and shall now attempt to point out some of the causes that degrade the sex, and prevent women from generalizing their observations.

I shall not go back to the remote annals of antiquity to trace the history of woman; it is sufficient to allow that she has always been either a slave, or a despot, and to remark, that each of these situations equally retards the progress of reason. The grand source of female folly and vice has ever appeared to me to arise from narrowness of mind; and the very constitution of civil governments has put almost insuperable obstacles in the way to prevent the cultivation of the female understanding:—yet virtue can be built on no other foundation! The same obstacles are thrown in the way of the rich, and the same consequences ensue.

Necessity has been proverbially termed the mother of invention—the aphorism may be extended to virtue. It is an acquirement, and an acquirement to which pleasure must be sacrificed—and who sacrifices pleasure when it is within the grasp, whose mind has not been opened and strengthened by adversity, or the pursuit of knowledge goaded on by necessity?—Happy is it when people have the cares of life to struggle with; for these struggles prevent their becoming a prey to enervating vices, merely from idleness! But, if from their birth men and women be placed in a torrid zone, with the meridian sun of pleasure darting directly upon them, how can they sufficiently brace their minds to discharge the duties of life, or even to relish the affections that carry them out of themselves?

Pleasure is the business of woman's life, according to the present modification of society, and while it continues to be so, little can be expected from such weak beings. Inheriting, in a lineal descent from the first fair defect in nature, the sovereignty of beauty, they have, to maintain their power, resigned the natural rights, which the exercise of reason might have procured them, and chosen rather to be short-lived queens than labour to obtain the sober pleasures that arise from equality. Exalted by their inferiority (this sounds like a contradiction), they constantly demand homage as women, though experience should teach them that the men who pride themselves upon paying this arbitrary insolent respect to the sex, with the most scrupulous exactness, are most inclined to tyrannize over, and despise, the very weakness they cherish. Often do they repeat Mr. Hume's sentiments; when, comparing the French and Athenian character, he al-

ludes to women. "But what is more singular in this whimsical nation, say I to the Athenians, is, that a frolick of yours during the Saturnalia, when the slaves are served by their masters, is seriously continued by them through the whole year, and through the whole course of their lives; accompanied too with some circumstances, which still further augment the absurdity and ridicule. Your sport only elevates for a few days those whom fortune has thrown down, and whom she too, in sport, may really elevate for ever above you. But this nation gravely exalts those, whom nature has subjected to them, and whose inferiority and infirmities are absolutely incurable. The women, though without virtue, are their masters and sovereigns."

Ah! why do women, I write with affectionate solicitude, condescend to receive a degree of attention and respect from strangers, different from that reciprocation of civility which the dictates of humanity and the politeness of civilization authorise between man and man? And, why do they not discover, when "in the noon of beauty's power," that they are treated like queens only to be deluded by hollow respect, till they are led to resign, or not assume, their natural prerogatives? Confined then in cages like the feathered race, they have nothing to do but to plume themselves, and stalk with mock majesty from perch to perch. It is true they are provided with food and raiment, for which they neither toil nor spin; but health, liberty, and virtue, are given in exchange. But, where, amongst mankind, has been found sufficient strength of mind to enable a being to resign these adventitious prerogatives; one who, rising with the calm dignity of reason above opinion, dared to be proud of the privileges inherent in man? And it is vain to expect it whilst hereditary power chokes the affections and nips reason in the bud.

The passions of men have thus placed women on thrones, and, till mankind become more reasonable, it is to be feared that women will avail themselves of the power which they attain with the least exertion, and which is the most indisputable. They will smile,—yes, they will smile, though told that—

In beauty's empire is no mean,
And woman, either slave or queen,
Is quickly scorn'd when not ador'd.

But the adoration comes first, and the scorn is not anticipated.

Lewis the XIVth, in particular, spread factitious manners, and caught, in a specious way, the whole nation in his toils; for, establishing an artful chain of despotism, he made it the interest of the people at large, individually to

respect his station and support his power. And women, whom he flattered by a puerile attention to the whole sex, obtained in his reign that prince-like distinction so fatal to reason and virtue.

A king is always a king—and a woman always a woman:* his authority and her sex, ever stand between them and rational converse. With a lover, I grant, she should be so, and her sensibility will naturally lead her to endeavour to excite emotion, not to gratify her vanity, but her heart. This I do not allow to be coquetry, it is the artless impulse of nature, I only exclaim against the sexual desire of conquest when the heart is out of the question.

This desire is not confined to women; “I have endeavoured,” says Lord Chesterfield, “to gain the hearts of twenty women, whose persons I would not have given a fig for.” The libertine, who, in a gust of passion, takes advantage of unsuspecting tenderness, is a saint when compared with this cold-hearted rascal; for I like to use significant words. Yet only taught to please, women are always on the watch to please, and with true heroic ardour endeavour to gain hearts merely to resign or spurn them, when the victory is decided, and conspicuous.

I must descend to the minutiae of the subject.

I lament that women are systematically degraded by receiving the trivial attentions, which men think it manly to pay to the sex, when, in fact, they are insultingly supporting their own superiority. It is not condescension to bow to an inferior. So ludicrous, in fact, do these ceremonies appear to me, that I scarcely am able to govern my muscles, when I see a man start with eager, and serious solicitude, to lift a handkerchief, or shut a door, when the *lady* could have done it herself, had she only moved a pace or two.

A wild wish has just flown from my heart to my head, and I will not stifle it though it may excite a horse-laugh.—I do earnestly wish to see the distinction of sex confounded in society, unless where love animates the behaviour. For this distinction is, I am firmly persuaded, the foundation of the weakness of character ascribed to woman; is the cause why the understanding is neglected whilst accomplishments are acquired with sedulous care: and the same cause accounts for their preferring the graceful before the heroic virtues.

Mankind, including every description, wish to be loved and respected by *something*; and the common herd will always take the nearest road to the completion of their wishes. The respect paid to wealth and beauty is the most certain, and unequivocal; and, of course, will always attract the

*And a wit, always a wit, might be added; for the vain fooleries of wits and beauties to obtain attention, and make conquests, are much upon a par.

vulgar eye of common minds. Abilities and virtues are absolutely necessary to raise men from the middle rank of life into notice; and the natural consequence is notorious, the middle rank contains most virtue and abilities. Men have thus, in one station, at least an opportunity of exerting themselves with dignity, and of rising by the exertions which really improve a rational creature; but the whole female sex are, till their character is formed, in the same condition as the rich: for they are born, I now speak of a state of civilization, with certain sexual privileges, and whilst they are gratuitously granted them, few will ever think of works of supererogation, to obtain the esteem of a small number of superiour people.

When do we hear of women who, starting out of obscurity, boldly claim respect on account of their great abilities or daring virtues? Where are they to be found?—"To be observed, to be attended to, to be taken notice of with sympathy, complacency, and approbation, are all the advantages which they seek."—True! my male readers will probably exclaim; but let them, before they draw any conclusion, recollect that this was not written originally as descriptive of women, but of the rich. In Dr. Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments, I have found a general character of people of rank and fortune, that, in my opinion, might with the greatest propriety be applied to the female sex. I refer the sagacious reader to the whole comparison; but must be allowed to quote a passage to enforce an argument that I mean to insist on, as the one most conclusive against a sexual character. For if, excepting warriors, no great men, of any denomination, have ever appeared amongst the nobility, may it not be fairly inferred that their local situation swallowed up the man, and produced a character similar to that of women, who are *localized*, if I may be allowed the word, by the rank they are placed in, by *courtesy*? Women, commonly called Ladies, are not to be contradicted in company, are not allowed to exert any manual strength; and from them the negative virtues only are expected, when any virtues are expected, patience, docility, good-humour, and flexibility; virtues incompatible with any vigorous exertion of intellect. Besides, by living more with each other, and being seldom absolutely alone, they are more under the influence of sentiments than passions. Solitude and reflection are necessary to give wishes the force of passions, and to enable the imagination to enlarge the object, and make it the most desirable. The same may be said of the rich; they do not sufficiently deal in general ideas, collected by impassioned thinking, or calm investigation, to acquire that strength of character on which great resolves are built. But hear what an acute observer says of the great.

"Do the great seem insensible of the early price at which they may acquire the publick admiration; or do they seem to imagine that to them, as

to other men, it must be the purchase either of sweat or of blood? By what important accomplishments is the young nobleman instructed to support the dignity of his rank, and to render himself worthy of that superiority over his fellow-citizens, to which the virtue of his ancestors had raised them? Is it by knowledge, by industry, by patience, by self-denial, or by virtue of any kind? As all his words, as all his motions are attended to, he learns an habitual regard to every circumstance of ordinary behaviour, and studies to perform all those small duties with the most exact propriety. As he is conscious how much he is observed, and how much mankind are disposed to favour all his inclinations, he acts, upon the most indifferent occasions, with that freedom and elevation which the thought of this naturally inspires. His air, his manner, his deportment, all mark that elegant and graceful sense of his own superiority, which those who are born to inferior station can hardly ever arrive at. These are the arts by which he proposes to make mankind more easily submit to his authority, and to govern their inclinations according to his own pleasure: and in this he is seldom disappointed. These arts, supported by rank and pre-eminence, are, upon ordinary occasions, sufficient to govern the world. Lewis XIV, during the greater part of his reign, was regarded, not only in France, but over all Europe, as the most perfect model of a great prince. But what were the talents and virtues by which he acquired this great reputation? Was it by the scrupulous and inflexible justice of all his undertakings, by the immense dangers and difficulties with which they were attended, or by the unwearyed and unrelenting application with which he pursued them? Was it by his extensive knowledge, by his exquisite judgment, or by his heroic valour? It was by none of these qualities. But he was, first of all, the most powerful prince in Europe, and consequently held the highest rank among kings; and then, says his historian, 'he surpassed all his courtiers in the gracefulness of his shape, and the majestic beauty of his features. The sound of his voice, noble and affecting, gained those hearts which his presence intimidated. He had a step and a deportment which could suit only him and his rank, and which would have been ridiculous in any other person. The embarrassment which he occasioned to those who spoke to him, flattered that secret satisfaction with which he felt his own superiority.' These frivolous accomplishments, supported by his rank, and, no doubt too, by a degree of other talents and virtues, which seems, however, not to have been much above mediocrity, established this prince in the esteem of his own age, and have drawn, even from posterity, a good deal of respect for his memory. Compared with these, in his own times, and in his own presence, no other virtue, it seems, appeared to have any merit. Knowledge, indus-

try, valour, and beneficence, trembled, were abashed, and lost all dignity before them.”

Woman also thus “in herself complete,” by possessing all these *frivolous* accomplishments, so changes the nature of things

———That what she wills to do or say
Seems wisest, virtuous, discreet, best;
All higher knowledge in *her presence* falls
Degraded. Wisdom in discourse with her
Loses discountenanc’d, and, like Folly, shows;
Authority and Reason on her wait.—

And all this is built on her loveliness!

In the middle rank of life, to continue the comparison, men, in their youth, are prepared for professions, and marriage is not considered as the grand feature in their lives; whilst women, on the contrary, have no other scheme to sharpen their faculties. It is not business, extensive plans, or any of the excursive flights of ambition, that engross their attention; no, their thoughts are not employed in rearing such noble structures. To rise in the world, and have the liberty of running from pleasure to pleasure, they must marry advantageously, and to this object their time is sacrificed, and their persons often legally prostituted. A man when he enters any profession has his eye steadily fixed on some future advantage (and the mind gains great strength by having all its efforts directed to one point), and, full of his business, pleasure is considered as mere relaxation; whilst women seek for pleasure as the main purpose of existence. In fact, from the education, which they receive from society, the love of pleasure may be said to govern them all; but does this prove that there is a sex in souls? It would be just as rational to declare that the courtiers in France, when a destructive system of despotism had formed their character, were not men, because liberty, virtue, and humanity, were sacrificed to pleasure and vanity.—Fatal passions, which have ever domineered over the *whole* race!

The same love of pleasure, fostered by the whole tendency of their education, gives a trifling turn to the conduct of women in most circumstances: for instance, they are ever anxious about secondary things; and on the watch for adventures, instead of being occupied by duties.

A man, when he undertakes a journey, has, in general, the end in view; a woman thinks more of the incidental occurrences, the strange things that may possibly occur on the road; the impression that she may make on her

fellow-travellers; and, above all, she is anxiously intent on the care of the finery that she carries with her, which is more than ever a part of herself, when going to figure on a new scene; when, to use an apt French turn of expression, she is going to produce a sensation.—Can dignity of mind exist with such trivial cares?

In short, women, in general, as well as the rich of both sexes, have acquired all the follies and vices of civilization, and missed the useful fruit. It is not necessary for me always to premise, that I speak of the condition of the whole sex, leaving exceptions out of the question. Their senses are inflamed, and their understandings neglected, consequently they become the prey of their senses, delicately termed sensibility, and are blown about by every momentary gust of feeling. Civilized women are, therefore, so weakened by false refinement, that, respecting morals, their condition is much below what it would be were they left in a state nearer to nature. Ever restless and anxious, their over exercised sensibility not only renders them uncomfortable themselves, but troublesome, to use a soft phrase, to others. All their thoughts turn on things calculated to excite emotion; and feeling, when they should reason, their conduct is unstable, and their opinions are wavering—not the wavering produced by deliberation or progressive views, but by contradictory emotions. By fits and starts they are warm in many pursuits; yet this warmth, never concentrated into perseverance, soon exhausts itself; exhaled by its own heat, or meeting with some other fleeting passion, to which reason has never given any specific gravity, neutrality ensues. Miserable, indeed, must be that being whose cultivation of mind has only tended to inflame its passions! A distinction should be made between inflaming and strengthening them. The passions thus pampered, whilst the judgment is left unformed, what can be expected to ensue?—Undoubtedly, a mixture of madness and folly!

This observation should not be confined to the *fair* sex; however, at present, I only mean to apply it to them.

Novels, music, poetry, and gallantry, all tend to make women the creatures of sensation, and their character is thus formed in the mould of folly during the time they are acquiring accomplishments, the only improvement they are excited, by their station in society, to acquire. This overstretched sensibility naturally relaxes the other powers of the mind, and prevents intellect from attaining that sovereignty which it ought to attain to render a rational creature useful to others, and content with its own station: for the exercise of the understanding, as life advances, is the only method pointed out by nature to calm the passions.

Satiety has a very different effect, and I have often been forcibly struck by an emphatical description of damnation:—when the spirit is represented as continually hovering with abortive eagerness round the defiled body, unable to enjoy any thing without the organs of sense. Yet, to their senses, are women made slaves, because it is by their sensibility that they obtain present power.

And will moralists pretend to assert, that this is the condition in which one half of the human race should be encouraged to remain with listless inactivity and stupid acquiescence? Kind instructors! what were we created for? To remain, it may be said, innocent; they mean in a state of childhood.—We might as well never have been born, unless it were necessary that we should be created to enable man to acquire the noble privilege of reason, the power of discerning good from evil, whilst we lie down in the dust from whence we were taken, never to rise again.—

It would be an endless task to trace the variety of meannesses, cares, and sorrows, into which women are plunged by the prevailing opinion, that they were created rather to feel than reason, and that all the power they obtain, must be obtained by their charms and weakness:

Fine by defect, and amiably weak!

And, made by this amiable weakness entirely dependent, excepting what they gain by illicit sway, on man, not only for protection, but advice, is it surprising that, neglecting the duties that reason alone points out, and shrinking from trials calculated to strengthen their minds, they only exert themselves to give their defects a graceful covering, which may serve to heighten their charms in the eye of the voluptuary, though it sink them below the scale of moral excellence?

Fragile in every sense of the word, they are obliged to look up to man for every comfort. In the most trifling dangers they cling to their support, with parasitical tenacity, piteously demanding succour; and their *natural* protector extends his arm, or lifts up his voice, to guard the lovely trembler—from what? Perhaps the frown of an old cow, or the jump of a mouse; a rat, would be a serious danger. In the name of reason, and even common sense, what can save such beings from contempt; even though they be soft and fair?

These fears, when not affected, may produce some pretty attitudes; but they shew a degree of imbecility which degrades a rational creature in a way women are not aware of—for love and esteem are very distinct things.

I am fully persuaded that we should hear of none of these infantine airs, if girls were allowed to take sufficient exercise, and not confined in close rooms till their muscles are relaxed, and their powers of digestion destroyed. To carry the remark still further, if fear in girls, instead of being cherished, perhaps, created, were treated in the same manner as cowardice in boys, we should quickly see women with more dignified aspects. It is true, they could not then with equal propriety be termed the sweet flowers that smile in the walk of man; but they would be more respectable members of society, and discharge the important duties of life by the light of their own reason. "Educate women like men," says Rousseau, "and the more they resemble our sex the less power will they have over us." This is the very point I aim at. I do not wish them to have power over men; but over themselves.

In the same strain have I heard men argue against instructing the poor; for many are the forms that aristocracy assumes. "Teach them to read and write," say they, "and you take them out of the station assigned them by nature." An eloquent Frenchman has answered them, I will borrow his sentiments. But they know not, when they make man a brute, that they may expect every instant to see him transformed into a ferocious beast. Without knowledge there can be no morality!

Ignorance is a frail base for virtue! Yet, that it is the condition for which woman was organized, has been insisted upon by the writers who have most vehemently argued in favour of the superiority of man; a superiority not in degree, but essence; though, to soften the argument, they have laboured to prove, with chivalrous generosity, that the sexes ought not to be compared; man was made to reason, woman to feel: and that together, flesh and spirit, they make the most perfect whole, by blending happily reason and sensibility into one character.

And what is sensibility? "Quickness of sensation; quickness of perception; delicacy." Thus is it defined by Dr. Johnson; and the definition gives me no other idea than of the most exquisitely polished instinct. I discern not a trace of the image of God in either sensation or matter. Refined seventy times seven, they are still material; intellect dwells not there; nor will fire ever make lead gold!

I come round to my old argument; if woman be allowed to have an immortal soul, she must have, as the employment of life, an understanding to improve. And when, to render the present state more complete, though every thing proves it to be but a fraction of a mighty sum, she is incited by present gratification to forget her grand destination, nature is counteracted, or she was born only to procreate and rot. Or, granting brutes, of every de-

scription, a soul, though not a reasonable one, the exercise of instinct and sensibility may be the step, which they are to take, in this life, towards the attainment of reason in the next; so that through all eternity they will lag behind man, who, why we cannot tell, had the power given him of attaining reason in his first mode of existence.

When I treat of the peculiar duties of women, as I should treat of the peculiar duties of a citizen or father, it will be found that I do not mean to insinuate that they should be taken out of their families, speaking of the majority. "He that hath wife and children," says Lord Bacon, "hath given hostages to fortune; for they are impediments to great enterprises, either of virtue or mischief. Certainly the best works, and of greatest merit for the public, have proceeded from the unmarried or childless men." I say the same of women. But, the welfare of society is not built on extraordinary exertions; and were it more reasonably organized, there would be still less need of great abilities, or heroic virtues.

In the regulation of a family, in the education of children, understanding, in an unsophisticated sense, is particularly required: strength both of body and mind; yet the men who, by their writings, have most earnestly laboured to domesticate women, have endeavoured, by arguments dictated by a gross appetite, which satiety had rendered fastidious, to weaken their bodies and cramp their minds. But, if even by these sinister methods they really *persuaded* women, by working on their feelings, to stay at home, and fulfil the duties of a mother and mistress of a family, I should cautiously oppose opinions that led women to right conduct, by prevailing on them to make the discharge of such important duties the main business of life, though reason were insulted. Yet, and I appeal to experience, if by neglecting the understanding they be as much, nay, more detached from these domestic employments, than they could be by the most serious intellectual pursuit, though it may be observed, that the mass of mankind will never vigorously pursue an intellectual object,* I may be allowed to infer that reason is absolutely necessary to enable a woman to perform any duty properly, and I must again repeat, that sensibility is not reason.

The comparison with the rich still occurs to me; for, when men neglect the duties of humanity, women will follow their example; a common stream hurries them both along with thoughtless celerity. Riches and honours prevent a man from enlarging his understanding, and enervate all his powers by reversing the order of nature, which has ever made true

*The mass of mankind are rather the slaves of their appetites than of their passions.

pleasure the reward of labour. Pleasure—enervating pleasure is, likewise, within women's reach without earning it. But, till hereditary possessions are spread abroad, how can we expect men to be proud of virtue? And, till they are, women will govern them by the most direct means, neglecting their dull domestic duties to catch the pleasure that sits lightly on the wing of time.

“The power of the woman,” says some author, “is her sensibility”; and men, not aware of the consequence, do all they can to make this power swallow up every other. Those who constantly employ their sensibility will have most: for example; poets, painters, and composers.* Yet, when the sensibility is thus increased at the expence of reason, and even the imagination, why do philosophical men complain of their fickleness? The sexual attention of man particularly acts on female sensibility, and this sympathy has been exercised from their youth up. A husband cannot long pay those attentions with the passion necessary to excite lively emotions, and the heart, accustomed to lively emotions, turns to a new lover, or pines in secret, the prey of virtue or prudence. I mean when the heart has really been rendered susceptible, and the taste formed; for I am apt to conclude, from what I have seen in fashionable life, that vanity is oftener fostered than sensibility by the mode of education, and the intercourse between the sexes, which I have reprobated; and that coquetry more frequently proceeds from vanity than from that inconstancy, which overstrained sensibility naturally produces.

Another argument that has had great weight with me, must, I think, have some force with every considerate benevolent heart. Girls who have been thus weakly educated, are often cruelly left by their parents without any provision; and, of course, are dependent on, not only the reason, but the bounty of their brothers. These brothers are, to view the fairest side of the question, good sort of men, and give as a favour, what children of the same parents had an equal right to. In this equivocal humiliating situation, a docile female may remain some time, with a tolerable degree of comfort. But, when the brother marries, a probable circumstance, from being considered as the mistress of the family, she is viewed with averted looks as an intruder, an unnecessary burden on the benevolence of the master of the house, and his new partner.

Who can recount the misery, which many unfortunate beings, whose minds and bodies are equally weak, suffer in such situations—unable to

*Men of these descriptions pour it into their compositions, to amalgamate the gross materials; and, moulding them with passion, give to the inert body a soul; but, in woman's imagination, love alone concentrates these ethereal beams.

work, and ashamed to beg? The wife, a cold-hearted, narrow-minded, woman, and this is not an unfair supposition; for the present mode of education does not tend to enlarge the heart any more than the understanding, is jealous of the little kindness which her husband shews to his relations; and her sensibility not rising to humanity, she is displeased at seeing the property of *her* children lavished on an helpless sister.

These are matters of fact, which have come under my eye again and again. The consequence is obvious, the wife has recourse to cunning to undermine the habitual affection, which she is afraid openly to oppose; and neither tears nor caresses are spared till the spy is worked out of her home, and thrown on the world, unprepared for its difficulties; or sent, as a great effort of generosity, or from some regard to propriety, with a small stipend, and an uncultivated mind, into joyless solitude.

These two women may be much upon a par, with respect to reason and humanity; and changing situations, might have acted just the same selfish part; but had they been differently educated, the case would also have been very different. The wife would not have had that sensibility, of which self is the centre, and reason might have taught her not to expect, and not even to be flattered by, the affection of her husband, if it led him to violate prior duties. She would wish not to love him merely because he loved her, but on account of his virtues; and the sister might have been able to struggle for herself instead of eating the bitter bread of dependence.

I am, indeed, persuaded that the heart, as well as the understanding, is opened by cultivation; and by, which may not appear so clear, strengthening the organs; I am not now talking of momentary flashes of sensibility, but of affections. And, perhaps, in the education of both sexes, the most difficult task is so to adjust instruction as not to narrow the understanding, whilst the heart is warmed by the generous juices of spring, just raised by the electric fermentation of the season; nor to dry up the feelings by employing the mind in investigations remote from life.

With respect to women, when they receive a careful education, they are either made fine ladies, brimful of sensibility, and teeming with capricious fancies; or mere notable women. The latter are often friendly, honest creatures, and have a shrewd kind of good sense joined with worldly prudence, that often render them more useful members of society than the fine sentimental lady, though they possess neither greatness of mind nor taste. The intellectual world is shut against them; take them out of their family or neighbourhood, and they stand still; the mind finding no employment, for literature affords a fund of amusement which they have never sought to relish, but frequently to despise. The sentiments and taste of

more cultivated minds appear ridiculous, even in those whom chance and family connections have led them to love; but in mere acquaintance they think it all affectation.

A man of sense can only love such a woman on account of her sex, and respect her, because she is a trusty servant. He lets her, to preserve his own peace, scold the servants, and go to church in clothes made of the very best materials. A man of her own size of understanding would, probably, not agree so well with her; for he might wish to encroach on her prerogative, and manage some domestic concerns himself. Yet women, whose minds are not enlarged by cultivation, or the natural selfishness of sensibility expanded by reflection, are very unfit to manage a family; for, by an undue stretch of power, they are always tyrannizing to support superiority that only rests on the arbitrary distinction of fortune. The evil is sometimes more serious, and domestics are deprived of innocent indulgences, and made to work beyond their strength, in order to enable the notable woman to keep a better table, and outshine her neighbours in finery and parade. If she attend to her children, it is, in general, to dress them in a costly manner—and, whether this attention arise from vanity or fondness, it is equally pernicious.

Besides, how many women of this description pass their days; or, at least, their evenings, discontentedly. Their husbands acknowledge that they are good managers, and chaste wives; but leave home to seek for more agreeable, may I be allowed to use a significant French word, *piquant* society; and the patient drudge, who fulfils her task, like a blind horse in a mill, is defrauded of her just reward; for the wages due to her are the caresses of her husband; and women who have so few resources in themselves, do not very patiently bear this privation of a natural right.

A fine lady, on the contrary, has been taught to look down with contempt on the vulgar employments of life; though she has only been incited to acquire accomplishments that rise a degree above sense; for even corporeal accomplishments cannot be acquired with any degree of precision unless the understanding has been strengthened by exercise. Without a foundation of principles taste is superficial, grace must arise from something deeper than imitation. The imagination, however, is heated, and the feelings rendered fastidious, if not sophisticated; or, a counterpoise of judgment is not acquired, when the heart still remains artless, though it becomes too tender.

These women are often amiable; and their hearts are really more sensible to general benevolence, more alive to the sentiments that civilize life, than the square-elbowed family drudge; but, wanting a due proportion of reflection and self-government, they only inspire love; and are the mis-

tresses of their husbands, whilst they have any hold on their affections; and the platonic friends of his male acquaintance. These are the fair defects in nature; the women who appear to be created not to enjoy the fellowship of man, but to save him from sinking into absolute brutality, by rubbing off the rough angles of his character; and by playful dalliance to give some dignity to the appetite that draws him to them.—Gracious Creator of the whole human race! hast thou created such a being as woman, who can trace thy wisdom in thy works, and feel that thou alone art by thy nature exalted above her,—for no better purpose?—Can she believe that she was only made to submit to man, her equal, a being, who, like her, was sent into the world to acquire virtue?—Can she consent to be occupied merely to please him; merely to adorn the earth, when her soul is capable of rising to thee?—And can she rest supinely dependent on man for reason, when she ought to mount with him the arduous steeps of knowledge?—

Yet, if love be the supreme good, let women be only educated to inspire it, and let every charm be polished to intoxicate the senses; but, if they be moral beings, let them have a chance to become intelligent; and let love to man be only a part of that glowing flame of universal love, which, after encircling humanity, mounts in grateful incense to God.

To fulfil domestic duties much resolution is necessary, and a serious kind of perseverance that requires a more firm support than emotions, however lively and true to nature. To give an example of order, the soul of virtue, some austerity of behaviour must be adopted, scarcely to be expected from a being who, from its infancy, has been made the weathercock of its own sensations. Whoever rationally means to be useful must have a plan of conduct; and, in the discharge of the simplest duty, we are often obliged to act contrary to the present impulse of tenderness or compassion. Severity is frequently the most certain, as well as the most sublime proof of affection; and the want of this power over the feelings, and of that lofty, dignified affection, which makes a person prefer the future good of the beloved object to a present gratification, is the reason why so many fond mothers spoil their children, and has made it questionable whether negligence or indulgence be most hurtful: but I am inclined to think, that the latter has done most harm.

Mankind seem to agree that children should be left under the management of women during their childhood. Now, from all the observation that I have been able to make, women of sensibility are the most unfit for this task, because they will infallibly, carried away by their feelings, spoil a child's temper. The management of the temper, the first, and most important branch of education, requires the sober steady eye of reason; a plan

of conduct equally distant from tyranny and indulgence: yet these are the extremes that people of sensibility alternately fall into; always shooting beyond the mark. I have followed this train of reasoning much further, till I have concluded, that a person of genius is the most improper person to be employed in education, public or private. Minds of this rare species see things too much in masses, and seldom, if ever, have a good temper. That habitual cheerfulness, termed good-humour, is, perhaps, as seldom united with great mental powers, as with strong feelings. And those people who follow, with interest and admiration, the flights of genius; or, with cooler approbations suck in the instruction which has been elaborately prepared for them by the profound thinker, ought not to be disgusted, if they find the former choleric, and the latter morose; because liveliness of fancy, and a tenacious comprehension of mind, are scarcely compatible with that pliant urbanity which leads a man, at least, to bend to the opinions and prejudices of others, instead of roughly confronting them.

But, treating of education or manners, minds of a superior class are not to be considered, they may be left to chance; it is the multitude, with moderate abilities, who call for instruction, and catch the colour of the atmosphere they breathe. This respectable concourse, I contend, men and women, should not have their sensations heightened in the hot-bed of luxurious indolence, at the expence of their understanding; for, unless there be a ballast of understanding, they will never become either virtuous or free: an aristocracy, founded on property, or sterling talents, will ever sweep before it, the alternately timid, and ferocious, slaves of feeling.

Numberless are the arguments, to take another view of the subject, brought forward with a shew of reason, because supposed to be deduced from nature, that men have used morally and physically, to degrade the sex. I must notice a few.

The female understanding has often been spoken of with contempt, as arriving sooner at maturity than the male. I shall not answer this argument by alluding to the early proofs of reason, as well as genius, in Cowley, Milton, and Pope,* but only appeal to experience to decide whether young men, who are early introduced into company (and examples now abound), do not acquire the same precocity. So notorious is this fact, that the bare mentioning of it must bring before people, who at all mix in the world, the idea of a number of swaggering apes of men, whose understandings are narrowed by being brought into the society of men when they ought to have been spinning a top or twirling a hoop.

*Many other names might be added.

It has also been asserted, by some naturalists, that men do not attain their full growth and strength till thirty; but that women arrive at maturity by twenty. I apprehend that they reason on false ground, led astray by the male prejudice, which deems beauty the perfection of woman—mere beauty of features and complexion, the vulgar acceptance of the word, whilst male beauty is allowed to have some connection with the mind. Strength of body, and that character of countenance, which the French term a *physionomie*, women do not acquire before thirty, any more than men. The little artless tricks of children, it is true, are particularly pleasing and attractive; yet, when the pretty freshness of youth is worn off, these artless graces become studied airs, and disgust every person of taste. In the countenance of girls we only look for vivacity and bashful modesty; but, the springtide of life over, we look for soberer sense in the face, and for traces of passion, instead of the dimples of animal spirits; expecting to see individuality of character, the only fastener of the affections.* We then wish to converse, not to fondle; to give scope to our imaginations as well as to the sensations of our hearts.

At twenty the beauty of both sexes is equal; but the libertinism of man leads him to make the distinction, and superannuated coquettes are commonly of the same opinion; for, when they can no longer inspire love, they pay for the vigour and vivacity of youth. The French, who admit more of mind into their notions of beauty, give the preference to women of thirty. I mean to say that they allow women to be in their most perfect state, when vivacity gives place to reason, and to that majestic seriousness of character, which marks maturity;—or, the resting point. In youth, till twenty, the body shoots out, till thirty the solids are attaining a degree of density; and the flexible muscles, growing daily more rigid, give character to the countenance; that is, they trace the operations of the mind with the iron pen of fate, and tell us not only what powers are within, but how they have been employed.

It is proper to observe, that animals who arrive slowly at maturity, are the longest lived, and of the noblest species. Men cannot, however, claim any natural superiority from the grandeur of longevity; for in this respect nature has not distinguished the male.

Polygamy is another physical degradation; and a plausible argument for a custom, that blasts every domestic virtue, is drawn from the well-attested fact, that in the countries where it is established, more females are born

*The strength of an affection is, generally, in the same proportion as the character of the species in the object beloved, is lost in that of the individual.

than males. This appears to be an indication of nature, and to nature, apparently reasonable speculations must yield. A further conclusion obviously presented itself; if polygamy be necessary, woman must be inferior to man, and made for him.

With respect to the formation of the fetus in the womb, we are very ignorant; but it appears to me probable, that an accidental physical cause may account for this phenomenon, and prove it not to be a law of nature. I have met with some pertinent observations on the subject in Forster's Account of the Isles of the South-Sea, that will explain my meaning. After observing that of the two sexes amongst animals, the most vigorous and hottest constitution always prevails, and produces its kind; he adds,—“If this be applied to the inhabitants of Africa, it is evident that the men there, accustomed to polygamy, are enervated by the use of so many women, and therefore less vigorous; the women, on the contrary, are of a hotter constitution, not only on account of their more irritable nerves, more sensible organization, and more lively fancy; but likewise because they are deprived in their matrimony of that share of physical love which, in a monogamous condition, would all be theirs; and thus, for the above reasons, the generality of children are born females.

“In the greater part of Europe it has been proved by the most accurate lists of mortality, that the proportion of men to women is nearly equal, or, if any difference takes place, the males born are more numerous, in the proportion of 105 to 100.”

The necessity of polygamy, therefore, does not appear; yet when a man seduces a woman, it should, I think, be termed a *left-handed* marriage, and the man should be *legally* obliged to maintain the woman and her children, unless adultery, a natural divorcement, abrogated the law. And this law should remain in force as long as the weakness of women caused the word seduction to be used as an excuse for their frailty and want of principle; nay, while they depend on man for a subsistence, instead of earning it by the exertion of their own hands or heads. But these women should not, in the full meaning of the relationship, be termed wives, or the very purpose of marriage would be subverted, and all those endearing charities that flow from personal fidelity, and give a sanctity to the tie, when neither love nor friendship unites the hearts, would melt into selfishness. The woman who is faithful to the father of her children demands respect, and should not be treated like a prostitute; though I readily grant that if it be necessary for a man and woman to live together in order to bring up their offspring, nature never intended that a man should have more than one wife.

Still, highly as I respect marriage, as the foundation of almost every social virtue, I cannot avoid feeling the most lively compassion for those

unfortunate females who are broken off from society, and by one error torn from all those affections and relationships that improve the heart and mind. It does not frequently even deserve the name of error; for many innocent girls become the dupes of a sincere, affectionate heart, and still more are, as it may emphatically be termed, *ruined* before they know the difference between virtue and vice:—and thus prepared by their education for infamy, they become infamous. Asylums and Magdalens are not the proper remedies for these abuses. It is justice, not charity, that is wanting in the world!

A woman who has lost her honour, imagines that she cannot fall lower, and as for recovering her former station, it is impossible; no exertion can wash this stain away. Losing thus every spur, and having no other means of support, prostitution becomes her only refuge, and the character is quickly depraved by circumstances over which the poor wretch has little power, unless she possesses an uncommon portion of sense and loftiness of spirit. Necessity never makes prostitution the business of men's lives; though numberless are the women who are thus rendered systematically vicious. This, however, arises, in a great degree, from the state of idleness in which women are educated, who are always taught to look up to man for a maintenance, and to consider their persons as the proper return for his exertions to support them. Meretricious airs, and the whole science of wantonness, have then a more powerful stimulus than either appetite or vanity; and this remark gives force to the prevailing opinion, that with chastity all is lost that is respectable in woman. Her character depends on the observance of one virtue, though the only passion fostered in her heart—is love. Nay, the honour of a woman is not made even to depend on her will.

When Richardson* makes Clarissa tell Lovelace that he had robbed her of her honour, he must have had strange notions of honour and virtue. For, miserable beyond all names of misery is the condition of a being, who could be degraded without its own consent! This excess of strictness I have heard vindicated as a salutary error. I shall answer in the words of Leibnitz—“Errors are often useful; but it is commonly to remedy other errors.”

Most of the evils of life arise from a desire of present enjoyment that outruns itself. The obedience required of women in the marriage state comes under this description; the mind, naturally weakened by depending on authority, never exerts its own powers, and the obedient wife is thus rendered a weak indolent mother. Or, supposing that this is not always the

*Dr. Young supports the same opinion, in his plays, when he talks of the misfortune that shunned the light of day.

consequence, a future state of existence is scarcely taken into the reckoning when only negative virtues are cultivated. For, in treating of morals, particularly when women are alluded to, writers have too often considered virtue in a very limited sense, and made the foundation of it *solely* worldly utility; nay, a still more fragile base has been given to this stupendous fabric, and the wayward fluctuating feelings of men have been made the standard of virtue. Yes, virtue as well as religion, has been subjected to the decisions of taste.

It would almost provoke a smile of contempt, if the vain absurdities of man did not strike us on all sides, to observe, how eager men are to degrade the sex from whom they pretend to receive the chief pleasure of life; and I have frequently with full conviction retorted Pope's sarcasm on them; or, to speak explicitly, it has appeared to me applicable to the whole human race. A love of pleasure or sway seems to divide mankind, and the husband who lords it in his little haram thinks only of his pleasure or his convenience. To such lengths, indeed, does an intemperate love of pleasure carry some prudent men, or worn out libertines, who marry to have a safe bed-fellow, that they seduce their own wives.—Hymen banishes modesty, and chaste love takes its flight.

Love, considered as an animal appetite, cannot long feed on itself without expiring. And this extinction in its own flame, may be termed the violent death of love. But the wife who has thus been rendered licentious, will probably endeavour to fill the void left by the loss of her husband's attentions; for she cannot contentedly become merely an upper servant after having been treated like a goddess. She is still handsome, and, instead of transferring her fondness to her children, she only dreams of enjoying the sunshine of life. Besides, there are many husbands so devoid of sense and parental affection, that during the first effervescence of voluptuous fondness they refuse to let their wives suckle their children. They are only to dress and live to please them: and love—even innocent love, soon sinks into lasciviousness when the exercise of a duty is sacrificed to its indulgence.

Personal attachment is a very happy foundation for friendship; yet, when even two virtuous young people marry, it would, perhaps, be happy if some circumstances checked their passion; if the recollection of some prior attachment, or disappointed affection, made it on one side, at least, rather a match founded on esteem. In that case they would look beyond the present moment, and try to render the whole of life respectable, by forming a plan to regulate a friendship which only death ought to dissolve.

Friendship is a serious affection; the most sublime of all affections, because it is founded on principle, and cemented by time. The very reverse

may be said of love. In a great degree, love and friendship cannot subsist in the same bosom; even when inspired by different objects they weaken or destroy each other, and for the same object can only be felt in succession. The vain fears and fond jealousies, the winds which fan the flame of love, when judiciously or artfully tempered, are both incompatible with the tender confidence and sincere respect of friendship.

Love, such as the glowing pen of genius has traced, exists not on earth, or only resides in those exalted, fervid imaginations that have sketched such dangerous pictures. Dangerous, because they not only afford a plausible excuse, to the voluptuary who disguises sheer sensuality under a sentimental veil; but as they spread affectation, and take from the dignity of virtue. Virtue, as the very word imports, should have an appearance of seriousness, if not of austerity; and to endeavour to trick her out in the garb of pleasure, because the epithet has been used as another name for beauty, is to exalt her on a quicksand; a most insidious attempt to hasten her fall by apparent respect. Virtue and pleasure are not, in fact, so nearly allied in this life as some eloquent writers have laboured to prove. Pleasure prepares the fading wreath, and mixes the intoxicating cup; but the fruit which virtue gives, is the recompence of toil: and, gradually seen as it ripens, only affords calm satisfaction; nay, appearing to be the result of the natural tendency of things, it is scarcely observed. Bread, the common food of life, seldom thought of as a blessing, supports the constitution and preserves health; still feasts delight the heart of man, though disease and even death lurk in the cup or dainty that elevates the spirits or tickles the palate. The lively heated imagination likewise, to apply the comparison, draws the picture of love, as it draws every other picture, with those glowing colours, which the daring hand will steal from the rainbow that is directed by a mind, condemned in a world like this, to prove its noble origin by panting after unattainable perfection; ever pursuing what it acknowledges to be a fleeting dream. An imagination of this vigorous cast can give existence to insubstantial forms, and stability to the shadowy reveries which the mind naturally falls into when realities are found vapid. It can then depict love with celestial charms, and dote on the grand ideal object—it can imagine a degree of mutual affection that shall refine the soul, and not expire when it has served as a “scale to heavenly”; and, like devotion, make it absorb every meaner affection and desire. In each other’s arms, as in a temple, with its summit lost in the clouds, the world is to be shut out, and every thought and wish, that do not nurture pure affection and permanent virtue.—Permanent virtue! alas! Rousseau, respectable visionary! thy paradise would soon be violated by the entrance of some unexpected guest. Like Milton’s it would

only contain angels, or men sunk below the dignity of rational creatures. Happiness is not material, it cannot be seen or felt! Yet the eager pursuit of the good which every one shapes to his own fancy, proclaims man the lord of this lower world, and to be an intelligential creature, who is not to receive, but acquire happiness. They, therefore, who complain of the delusions of passion, do not recollect that they are exclaiming against a strong proof of the immortality of the soul.

But leaving superior minds to correct themselves, and pay dearly for their experience, it is necessary to observe, that it is not against strong, persevering passions; but romantic wavering feelings that I wish to guard the female heart by exercising the understanding: for these paradisiacal reveries are oftener the effect of idleness than of a lively fancy.

Women have seldom sufficient serious employment to silence their feelings; a round of little cares, or vain pursuits frittering away all strength of mind and organs, they become naturally only objects of sense.—In short, the whole tenour of female education (the education of society) tends to render the best disposed romantic and inconstant; and the remainder vain and mean. In the present state of society this evil can scarcely be remedied, I am afraid, in the slightest degree; should a more laudable ambition ever gain ground they may be brought nearer to nature and reason, and become more virtuous and useful as they grow more respectable.

But, I will venture to assert that their reason will never acquire sufficient strength to enable it to regulate their conduct, whilst the making an appearance in the world is the first wish of the majority of mankind. To this weak wish the natural affections, and the most useful virtues are sacrificed. Girls marry merely to *better themselves*, to borrow a significant vulgar phrase, and have such perfect power over their hearts as not to permit themselves to *fall in love* till a man with superior fortune offers. On this subject I mean to enlarge in a future chapter; it is only necessary to drop a hint at present, because women are so often degraded by suffering the selfish prudence of age to chill the ardour of youth.

From the same source flows an opinion that young girls ought to dedicate great part of their time to needle-work; yet, this employment contracts their faculties more than any other that could have been chosen for them, by confining their thoughts to their persons. Men order their clothes to be made, and have done with the subject; women make their own clothes, necessary or ornamental, and are continually talking about them; and their thoughts follow their hands. It is not indeed the making of necessaries that weakens the mind; but the frippery of dress. For when a woman in the lower rank of life makes her husband's and children's clothes, she does her

duty, this is her part of the family business; but when women work only to dress better than they could otherwise afford, it is worse than sheer loss of time. To render the poor virtuous they must be employed, and women in the middle rank of life, did they not ape the fashions of the nobility, without catching their ease, might employ them, whilst they themselves managed their families, instructed their children, and exercised their own minds. Gardening, experimental philosophy, and literature, would afford them subjects to think of and matter for conversation, that in some degree would exercise their understandings. The conversation of French women, who are not so rigidly nailed to their chairs to twist lappets, and knot ribands, is frequently superficial; but, I contend, that it is not half so insipid as that of those English women whose time is spent making caps, bonnets, and the whole mischief of trimmings, not to mention shopping, bargain-hunting, &c. &c.: and it is the decent, prudent women, who are most degraded by these practices; for their motive is simply vanity. The wanton who exercises her taste to render her passion alluring, has something more in view.

These observations all branch out of a general one, which I have before made, and which cannot be too often insisted upon, for, speaking of men, women, or professions, it will be found that the employment of the thoughts shapes the character both generally and individually. The thoughts of women ever hover round their persons, and is it surprising that their persons are reckoned most valuable? Yet some degree of liberty of mind is necessary even to form the person; and this may be one reason why some gentle wives have so few attractions beside that of sex. Add to this, sedentary employments render the majority of women sickly—and false notions of female excellence make them proud of this delicacy, though it be another fetter, that by calling the attention continually to the body, cramps the activity of the mind.

Women of quality seldom do any of the manual part of their dress, consequently only their taste is exercised, and they acquire, by thinking less of the finery, when the business of their toilet is over, that ease, which seldom appears in the deportment of women, who dress merely for the sake of dressing. In fact, the observation with respect to the middle rank, the one in which talents thrive best, extends not to women; for those of the superior class, by catching, at least, a smattering of literature, and conversing more with men, on general topics, acquire more knowledge than the women who ape their fashions and faults without sharing their advantages. With respect to virtue, to use the word in a comprehensive sense, I have seen most in low life. Many poor women maintain their children by the sweat of their

brow, and keep together families that the vices of the fathers would have scattered abroad; but gentlewomen are too indolent to be actively virtuous, and are softened rather than refined by civilization. Indeed, the good sense which I have met with, among the poor women who have had few advantages of education, and yet have acted heroically, strongly confirmed me in the opinion that trifling employments have rendered woman a trifle. Man, taking her* body, the mind is left to rust; so that while physical love enervates man, as being his favourite recreation, he will endeavour to enslave woman:—and, who can tell, how many generations may be necessary to give vigour to the virtue and talents of the freed posterity of abject slaves?†

In tracing the causes that, in my opinion, have degraded woman, I have confined my observations to such as universally act upon the morals and manners of the whole sex, and to me it appears clear that they all spring from want of understanding. Whether this arise from a physical or accidental weakness of faculties, time alone can determine; for I shall not lay any great stress on the example of a few women‡ who, from having received a masculine education, have acquired courage and resolution; I only contend that the men who have been placed in similar situations, have acquired a similar character—I speak of bodies of men, and that men of genius and talents have started out of a class, in which women have never yet been placed.

*“I take her body,” says Ranger.

†“Supposing that women are voluntary slaves—slavery of any kind is unfavourable to human happiness and improvement.” *Knox's Essays*

‡Sappho, Eloisa, Mrs. Macaulay, the Empress of Russia, Madame d'Eon, &c. These, and many more, may be reckoned exceptions; and, are not all heroes, as well as heroines, exceptions to general rules? I wish to see women neither heroines nor brutes; but reasonable creatures.

CHAP. V.

ANIMADVERSIONS ON SOME OF THE WRITERS WHO HAVE RENDERED WOMEN OBJECTS OF PITY, BORDERING ON CONTEMPT.

The opinions speciously supported, in some modern publications on the female character and education, which have given the tone to most of the observations made, in a more cursory manner, on the sex, remain now to be examined.

SECT. I.

I shall begin with Rousseau, and give a sketch of his character of woman, in his own words, interspersing comments and reflections. My comments, it is true, will all spring from a few simple principles, and might have been deduced from what I have already said; but the artificial structure has been raised with so much ingenuity, that it seems necessary to attack it in a more circumstantial manner, and make the application myself.

Sophia, says Rousseau, should be as perfect a woman as Emilius is a man, and to render her so, it is necessary to examine the character which nature has given to the sex.

He then proceeds to prove that woman ought to be weak and passive, because she has less bodily strength than man; and hence infers, that she

was formed to please and to be subject to him; and that it is her duty to render herself *agreeable* to her master—this being the grand end of her existence.* Still, however, to give a little mock dignity to lust, he insists that man should not exert his strength, but depend on the will of the woman, when he seeks for pleasure with her.

“Hence we deduce a third consequence from the different constitutions of the sexes; which is, that the strongest should be master in appearance, and be dependent in fact on the weakest; and that not from any frivolous practice of gallantry or vanity of protectorship, but from an invariable law of nature, which, furnishing woman with a greater facility to excite desires than she has given man to satisfy them, makes the latter dependent on the good pleasure of the former, and compels him to endeavour to please in his turn, *in order to obtain her consent that he should be strongest.*† On these occasions, the most delightful circumstance a man finds in his victory is, to doubt whether it was the woman’s weakness that yielded to his superior strength, or whether her inclinations spoke in his favour: the females are also generally artful enough to leave this matter in doubt. The understanding of women answers in this respect perfectly to their constitution: so far from being ashamed of their weakness, they glory in it; their tender muscles make no resistance; they affect to be incapable of lifting the smallest burthens, and would blush to be thought robust and strong. To what purpose is all this? Not merely for the sake of appearing delicate, but through an artful precaution: it is thus they provide an excuse beforehand, and a right to be feeble when they think it expedient.”

I have quoted this passage, lest my readers should suspect that I warped the author’s reasoning to support my own arguments. I have already asserted that in educating women these fundamental principles lead to a system of cunning and lasciviousness.

Supposing woman to have been formed only to please, and be subject to man, the conclusion is just, she ought to sacrifice every other consideration to render herself agreeable to him: and let this brutal desire of self-preservation be the grand spring of all her actions, when it is proved to be the iron bed of fate, to fit which her character should be stretched or contracted, regardless of all moral or physical distinctions. But, if, as I think, may be demonstrated, the purposes, of even this life, viewing the whole, be subverted by practical rules built upon this ignoble base, I may be allowed to doubt whether woman were created for man: and, though the cry

*I have already inserted the passage, page [74–75].

†What nonsense!

of irreligion, or even atheism, be raised against me, I will simply declare, that were an angel from heaven to tell me that Moses's beautiful, poetical cosmogony, and the account of the fall of man, were literally true, I could not believe what my reason told me was derogatory to the character of the Supreme Being: and, having no fear of the devil before mine eyes, I venture to call this a suggestion of reason, instead of resting my weakness on the broad shoulders of the first seducer of my frail sex.

"It being once demonstrated," continues Rousseau, "that man and woman are not, nor ought to be, constituted alike in temperament and character, it follows of course that they should not be educated in the same manner. In pursuing the directions of nature, they ought indeed to act in concert, but they should not be engaged in the same employments: the end of their pursuits should be the same, but the means they should take to accomplish them, and of consequence their tastes and inclinations, should be different."

.....

"Whether I consider the peculiar destination of the sex, observe their inclinations, or remark their duties, all things equally concur to point out the peculiar method of education best adapted to them. Woman and man were made for each other; but their mutual dependence is not the same. The men depend on the women only on account of their desires; the women on the men both on account of their desires and their necessities: we could subsist better without them than they without us."

.....

"For this reason, the education of the women should be always relative to the men. To please, to be useful to us, to make us love and esteem them, to educate us when young, and take care of us when grown up, to advise, to console us, to render our lives easy and agreeable: these are the duties of women at all times, and what they should be taught in their infancy. So long as we fail to recur to this principle, we run wide of the mark, and all the precepts which are given them contribute neither to their happiness nor our own."

.....

"Girls are from their earliest infancy fond of dress. Not content with being pretty, they are desirous of being thought so; we see, by all their little airs, that this thought engages their attention; and they are hardly capable of understanding what is said to them, before they are to be governed by talking to them of what people will think of their behavior. The same motive, however, indiscreetly made use of with boys, has not the same

effect: provided they are let pursue their amusements at pleasure, they care very little what people think of them. Time and pains are necessary to subject boys to this motive.

Whencesoever girls derive this first lesson, it is a very good one. As the body is born, in a manner, before the soul, our first concern should be to cultivate the former; this order is common to both sexes, but the object of that cultivation is different. In the one sex it is the developement of corporeal powers; in the other, that of personal charms: not that either the quality of strength or beauty ought to be confined exclusively to one sex; but only that the order of the cultivation of both is in that respect reversed. Women certainly require as much strength as to enable them to move and act gracefully, and men as much address as to qualify them to act with ease.”

.....

“Children of both sexes have a great many amusements in common; and so they ought; have they not also many such when they are grown up? Each sex has also its peculiar taste to distinguish in this particular. Boys love sports of noise and activity; to beat the drum, to whip the top, and to drag about their little carts: girls, on the other hand, are fonder of things of show and ornament; such as mirrors, trinkets, and dolls: the doll is the peculiar amusement of the females; from whence we see their taste plainly adapted to their destination. The physical part of the art of pleasing lies in dress; and this is all which children are capacitated to cultivate of that art.”

.....

“Here then we see a primary propensity firmly established, which you need only to pursue and regulate. The little creature will doubtless be very desirous to know how to dress up her doll, to make its sleeve-knots, its flounces, its head-dress, &c. she is obliged to have so much recourse to the people about her, for their assistance in these articles, that it would be much more agreeable to her to owe them all to her own industry. Hence we have a good reason for the first lessons that are usually taught these young females: in which we do not appear to be setting them a task, but obliging them, by instructing them in what is immediately useful to themselves. And, in fact, almost all of them learn with reluctance to read and write; but very readily apply themselves to the use of their needles. They imagine themselves already grown up, and think with pleasure that such qualifications will enable them to decorate themselves.”

This is certainly only an education of the body; but Rousseau is not the only man who has indirectly said that merely the person of a *young* woman, without any mind, unless animal spirits come under that descrip-

tion, is very pleasing. To render it weak, and what some may call beautiful, the understanding is neglected, and girls forced to sit still, play with dolls and listen to foolish conversations;—the effect of habit is insisted upon as an undoubted indication of nature. I know it was Rousseau's opinion that the first years of youth should be employed to form the body, though in educating Emilius he deviates from this plan; yet, the difference between strengthening the body, on which strength of mind in a great measure depends, and only giving it an easy motion, is very wide.

Rousseau's observations, it is proper to remark, were made in a country where the art of pleasing was refined only to extract the grossness of vice. He did not go back to nature, or his ruling appetite disturbed the operations of reason, else he would not have drawn these crude inferences.

In France boys and girls, particularly the latter, are only educated to please, to manage their persons, and regulate their exterior behaviour; and their minds are corrupted, at a very early age, by the worldly and pious cautions they receive to guard them against immodesty. I speak of past times. The very confessions which mere children were obliged to make, and the questions asked by the holy men, I assert these facts on good authority, were sufficient to impress a sexual character; and the education of society was a school of coquetry and art. At the age of ten or eleven; nay, often much sooner, girls began to coquet, and talked, unreproved, of establishing themselves in the world by marriage.

In short, they were treated like women, almost from their very birth, and compliments were listened to instead of instruction. These, weakening the mind, Nature was supposed to have acted like a step-mother, when she formed this after-thought of creation.

Not allowing them understanding, however, it was but consistent to subject them to authority independent of reason; and to prepare them for this subjection, he gives the following advice:

“Girls ought to be active and diligent; nor is that all; they should also be early subjected to restraint. This misfortune, if it really be one, is inseparable from their sex; nor do they ever throw it off but to suffer more cruel evils. They must be subject, all their lives, to the most constant and severe restraint, which is that of decorum: it is, therefore, necessary to accustom them early to such confinement, that it may not afterwards cost them too dear; and to the suppression of their caprices, that they may the more readily submit to the will of others. If, indeed, they be fond of being always at work, they should be sometimes compelled to lay it aside. Dissipation, levity, and inconstancy, are faults that readily spring up from their first propensities, when corrupted or perverted by too much indulgence.

To prevent this abuse, we should teach them, above all things, to lay a due restraint on themselves. The life of a modest woman is reduced, by our absurd institutions, to a perpetual conflict with herself: not but it is just that this sex should partake of the sufferings which arise from those evils it hath caused us."

And why is the life of a modest woman a perpetual conflict? I should answer, that this very system of education makes it so. Modesty, temperance, and self-denial, are the sober offspring of reason; but when sensibility is nurtured at the expence of the understanding, such weak beings must be restrained by arbitrary means, and be subjected to continual conflicts; but give their activity of mind a wider range, and nobler passions and motives will govern their appetites and sentiments.

"The common attachment and regard of a mother, nay, mere habit, will make her beloved by her children, if she do nothing to incur their hate. Even the constraint she lays them under, if well directed, will increase their affection, instead of lessening it; because a state of dependance being natural to the sex, they perceive themselves formed for obedience."

This is begging the question; for servitude not only debases the individual, but its effects seem to be transmitted to posterity. Considering the length of time that women have been dependent, is it surprising that some of them hug their chains, and fawn like the spaniel? "These dogs," observes a naturalist, "at first kept their ears erect; but custom has superseded nature, and a token of fear is become a beauty."

"For the same reason," adds Rousseau, "women have, or ought to have, but little liberty; they are apt to indulge themselves excessively in what is allowed them. Addicted in every thing to extremes, they are even more transported at their diversions than boys."

The answer to this is very simple. Slaves and mobs have always indulged themselves in the same excesses, when once they broke loose from authority.—The bent bow recoils with violence, when the hand is suddenly relaxed that forcibly held it; and sensibility, the play-thing of outward circumstances, must be subjected to authority, or moderated by reason.

"There results," he continues, "from this habitual restraint a tractableness which women have occasion for during their whole lives, as they constantly remain either under subjection to the men, or to the opinions of mankind; and are never permitted to set themselves above those opinions. The first and most important qualification in a woman is good-nature or sweetness of temper: formed to obey a being so imperfect as man, often full of vices, and always full of faults, she ought to learn betimes even to suffer injustice, and to bear the insults of a husband without complaint; it

is not for his sake, but her own, that she should be of a mild disposition. The perverseness and ill-nature of the women only serve to aggravate their own misfortunes, and the misconduct of their husbands; they might plainly perceive that such are not the arms by which they gain the superiority.”

Formed to live with such an imperfect being as man, they ought to learn from the exercise of their faculties the necessity of forbearance; but all the sacred rights of humanity are violated by insisting on blind obedience; or, the most sacred rights belong *only* to man.

The being who patiently endures injustice, and silently bears insults, will soon become unjust, or unable to discern right from wrong. Besides, I deny the fact, this is not the true way to form or meliorate the temper; for, as a sex, men have better tempers than women, because they are occupied by pursuits that interest the head as well as the heart; and the steadiness of the head gives a healthy temperature to the heart. People of sensibility have seldom good tempers. The formation of the temper is the cool work of reason, when, as life advances, she mixes with happy art, jarring elements. I never knew a weak or ignorant person who had a good temper, though that constitutional good humour, and that docility, which fear stamps on the behaviour, often obtains the name. I say behaviour, for genuine meekness never reached the heart or mind, unless as the effect of reflection; and that simple restraint produces a number of peccant humours in domestic life, many sensible men will allow, who find some of these gentle irritable creatures, very troublesome companions.

“Each sex,” he further argues, “should preserve its peculiar tone and manner; a meek husband may make a wife impertinent; but mildness of disposition on the woman’s side will always bring a man back to reason, at least if he be not absolutely a brute, and will sooner or later triumph over him.” Perhaps the mildness of reason might sometimes have this effect; but abject fear always inspires contempt; and tears are only eloquent when they flow down fair cheeks.

Of what materials can that heart be composed, which can melt when insulted, and instead of revolting at injustice, kiss the rod? Is it unfair to infer that her virtue is built on narrow views and selfishness, who can caress a man, with true feminine softness, the very moment when he treats her tyrannically? Nature never dictated such insincerity;—and, though prudence of this sort be termed a virtue, morality becomes vague when any part is supposed to rest on falsehood. These are mere expedients, and expedients are only useful for the moment.

Let the husband beware of trusting too implicitly to this servile obedience; for if his wife can with winning sweetness caress him when angry,

and when she ought to be angry, unless contempt had stifled a natural effervescence, she may do the same after parting with a lover. These are all preparations for adultery; or, should the fear of the world, or of hell, restrain her desire of pleasing other men, when she can no longer please her husband, what substitute can be found by a being who was only formed, by nature and art, to please man? what can make her amends for this privation, or where is she to seek for a fresh employment? where find sufficient strength of mind to determine to begin the search, when her habits are fixed, and vanity has long ruled her chaotic mind?

But this partial moralist recommends cunning systematically and plausibly.

“Daughters should be always submissive; their mothers, however, should not be inexorable. To make a young person tractable, she ought not to be made unhappy, to make her modest she ought not to be rendered stupid. On the contrary, I should not be displeased at her being permitted to use some art, not to elude punishment in case of disobedience, but to exempt herself from the necessity of obeying. It is not necessary to make her dependence burdensome, but only to let her feel it. Subtilty is a talent natural to the sex; and, as I am persuaded, all our natural inclinations are right and good in themselves, I am of opinion this should be cultivated as well as the others: it is requisite for us only to prevent its abuse.”

“Whatever is, is right,” he then proceeds triumphantly to infer. Granted;—yet, perhaps, no aphorism ever contained a more paradoxical assertion. It is a solemn truth with respect to God. He, reverentially I speak, sees the whole at once, and saw its just proportions in the womb of time; but man, who can only inspect disjointed parts, finds many things wrong; and it is a part of the system, and therefore right, that he should endeavour to alter what appears to him to be so, even while he bows to the Wisdom of his Creator, and respects the darkness he labours to disperse.

The inference that follows is just, supposing the principle to be sound. “The superiority of address, peculiar to the female sex, is a very equitable indemnification for their inferiority in point of strength: without this, woman would not be the companion of man; but his slave: it is by her superiour art and ingenuity that she preserves her equality, and governs him while she affects to obey. Woman has every thing against her, as well our faults, as her own timidity and weakness; she has nothing in her favour, but her subtilty and her beauty. Is it not very reasonable, therefore, she should cultivate both?” Greatness of mind can never dwell with cunning, or address; for I shall not boggle about words, when their direct signification is

insincerity and falsehood, but content myself with observing, that if any class of mankind be so created that it must necessarily be educated by rules not strictly deducible from truth, virtue is an affair of convention. How could Rousseau dare to assert, after giving this advice, that in the grand end of existence the object of both sexes should be the same, when he well knew that the mind, formed by its pursuits, is expanded by great views swallowing up little ones, or that it becomes itself little?

Men have superiour strength of body; but were it not for mistaken notions of beauty, women would acquire sufficient to enable them to earn their own subsistence, the true definition of independence; and to bear those bodily inconveniencies and exertions that are requisite to strengthen the mind.

Let us then, by being allowed to take the same exercise as boys, not only during infancy, but youth, arrive at perfection of body, that we may know how far the natural superiority of man extends. For what reason or virtue can be expected from a creature when the seed-time of life is neglected? None—did not the winds of heaven casually scatter many useful seeds in the fallow ground.

“Beauty cannot be acquired by dress, and coquetry is an art not so early and speedily attained. While girls are yet young, however, they are in a capacity to study agreeable gesture, a pleasing modulation of voice, an easy carriage and behaviour; as well as to take the advantage of gracefully adapting their looks and attitudes to time, place, and occasion. Their application, therefore, should not be solely confined to the arts of industry and the needle, when they come to display other talents, whose utility is already apparent.

“For my part, I would have a young Englishwoman cultivate her agreeable talents, in order to please her future husband, with as much care and assiduity as a young Circassian cultivates her’s, to fit her for the Haram of an Eastern bashaw.”

To render women completely insignificant, he adds—“The tongues of women are very voluble; they speak earlier, more readily, and more agreeably, than the men; they are accused also of speaking much more: but so it ought to be, and I should be very ready to convert this reproach into a compliment; their lips and eyes have the same activity, and for the same reason. A man speaks of what he knows, a woman of what pleases her; the one requires knowledge, the other taste; the principal object of a man’s discourse should be what is useful, that of a woman’s what is agreeable. There ought to be nothing in common between their different conversation but truth.

“We ought not, therefore, to restrain the prattle of girls, in the same manner as we should that of boys, with that severe question; *To what purpose are you talking?* but by another, which is no less difficult to answer, *How will your discourse be received?* In infancy, while they are as yet incapable to discern good from evil, they ought to observe it, as a law, never to say any thing disagreeable to those whom they are speaking to: what will render the practice of this rule also the more difficult, is, that it must ever be subordinate to the former, of never speaking falsely or telling an untruth.” To govern the tongue in this manner must require great address indeed; and it is too much practised both by men and women.—Out of the abundance of the heart how few speak! So few, that I, who love simplicity, would gladly give up politeness for a quarter of the virtue that has been sacrificed to an equivocal quality which at best should only be the polish of virtue.

But, to complete the sketch. “It is easy to be conceived, that if male children be not in a capacity to form any true notions of religion, those ideas must be greatly above the conception of the females: it is for this very reason, I would begin to speak to them the earlier on this subject; for if we were to wait till they were in a capacity to discuss methodically such profound questions, we should run a risk of never speaking to them on this subject as long as they lived. Reason in women is a practical reason, capacitating them artfully to discover the means of attaining a known end, but which would never enable them to discover that end itself. The social relations of the sexes are indeed truly admirable: from their union there results a moral person, of which woman may be termed the eyes, and man the hand, with this dependence on each other, that it is from the man that the woman is to learn what she is to see, and it is of the woman that man is to learn what he ought to do. If woman could recur to the first principles of things as well as man, and man was capacitated to enter into their *minutiae* as well as woman, always independent of each other, they would live in perpetual discord, and their union could not subsist. But in the present harmony which naturally subsists between them, their different faculties tend to one common end: it is difficult to say which of them conduces the most to it: each follows the impulse of the other; each is obedient, and both are masters.

“As the conduct of a woman is subservient to the public opinion, her faith in matters of religion should, for that very reason, be subject to authority. *Every daughter ought to be of the same religion as her mother, and every wife to be of the same religion as her husband: for, though such religion should be false, that docility which induces the mother and daugh-*

ter to submit to the order of nature, takes away, in the sight of God, the criminality of their error.* As they are not in a capacity to judge for themselves, they ought to abide by the decision of their fathers and husbands as confidently as by that of the church.

“As authority ought to regulate the religion of the women, it is not so needful to explain to them the reasons for their belief, as to lay down precisely the tenets they are to believe: for the creed, which presents only obscure ideas to the mind, is the source of fanaticism; and that which presents absurdities, leads to infidelity.”

Absolute, uncontroverted authority, it seems, must subsist somewhere: but is not this a direct and exclusive appropriation of reason? The *rights* of humanity have been thus confined to the male line from Adam downwards. Rousseau would carry his male aristocracy still further, for he insinuates, that he should not blame those, who contend for leaving woman in a state of the most profound ignorance, if it were not necessary in order to preserve her chastity and justify the man's choice, in the eyes of the world, to give her a little knowledge of men, and the customs produced by human passions; else she might propagate at home without being rendered less voluptuous and innocent by the exercise of her understanding: excepting, indeed, during the first year of marriage, when she might employ it to dress like Sophia. “Her dress is extremely modest in appearance, and yet very coquettish in fact: she does not make a display of her charms, she conceals them; but in concealing them, she knows how to affect your imagination. Every one who sees her will say, There is a modest and discreet girl; but while you are near her, your eyes and affections wander all over her person, so that you cannot withdraw them; and you would conclude, that every part of her dress, simple as it seems, was only put in its proper order to be taken to pieces by the imagination.” Is this modesty? Is this a preparation for immortality? Again.—What opinion are we to form of a system of education, when the author says of his heroine, “that with her, doing things well, is but a *secondary* concern; her principal concern is to do them *neatly*.”

Secondary, in fact, are all her virtues and qualities, for, respecting religion, he makes her parents thus address her, accustomed to submission—“Your husband will instruct you in *good time*.”

*What is to be the consequence, if the mother's and husband's opinion should *chance* not to agree? An ignorant person cannot be reasoned out of an error—and when *persuaded* to give up one prejudice for another the mind is unsettled. Indeed, the husband may not have any religion to teach her, though in such a situation she will be in great want of a support to her virtue, independent of worldly considerations.

After thus cramping a woman's mind, if, in order to keep it fair, he have not made it quite a blank, he advises her to reflect, that a reflecting man may not yawn in her company, when he is tired of caressing her.—What has she to reflect about who must obey? and would it not be a refinement on cruelty only to open her mind to make the darkness and misery of her fate *visible*? Yet, these are his sensible remarks; how consistent with what I have already been obliged to quote, to give a fair view of the subject, the reader may determine.

“They who pass their whole lives in working for their daily bread, have no ideas beyond their business or their interest, and all their understanding seems to lie in their fingers' ends. This ignorance is neither prejudicial to their integrity nor their morals; it is often of service to them. Sometimes, by means of reflection, we are led to compound with our duty, and we conclude by substituting a jargon of words, in the room of things. Our own conscience is the most enlightened philosopher. There is no need to be acquainted with Tully's offices, to make a man of probity: and perhaps the most virtuous woman in the world, is the least acquainted with the definition of virtue. But it is no less true, that an improved understanding only can render society agreeable; and it is a melancholy thing for a father of a family, who is fond of home, to be obliged to be always wrapped up in himself, and to have nobody about him to whom he can impart his sentiments.

“Besides, how should a woman void of reflection be capable of educating her children? How should she discern what is proper for them? How should she incline them to those virtues she is unacquainted with, or to that merit of which she has no idea? She can only sooth or chide them; render them insolent or timid; she will make them formal coxcombs, or ignorant blockheads; but will never make them sensible or amiable.” How indeed should she, when her husband is not always at hand to lend her his reason?—when they both together make but one moral being. A blind will, “eyes without hands,” would go a very little way; and perchance his abstract reason, that should concentrate the scattered beams of her practical reason, may be employed in judging of the flavour of wine, descanting on the sauces most proper for turtle; or, more profoundly intent at a card-table, he may be generalizing his ideas as he bets away his fortune, leaving all the *minutiæ* of education to his helpmate, or to chance.

But, granting that woman ought to be beautiful, innocent, and silly, to render her a more alluring and indulgent companion;—what is her understanding sacrificed for? And why is all this preparation necessary only, according to Rousseau's own account, to make her the mistress of her husband, a very short time? For no man ever insisted more on the transient na-

ture of love. Thus speaks the philosopher. “Sensual pleasures are transient. The habitual state of the affections always loses by their gratification. The imagination, which decks the object of our desires, is lost in fruition. Excepting the Supreme Being, who is self-existent, there is nothing beautiful but what is ideal.”

But he returns to his unintelligible paradoxes again, when he thus addresses Sophia. “Emilius, in becoming your husband, is become your master; and claims your obedience. Such is the order of nature. When a man is married, however, to such a wife as Sophia, it is proper he should be directed by her: this is also agreeable to the order of nature: it is, therefore, to give you as much authority over his heart as his sex gives him over your person, that I have made you the arbiter of his pleasures. It may cost you, perhaps, some disagreeable self-denial; but you will be certain of maintaining your empire over him, if you can preserve it over yourself—what I have already observed, also, shows me, that this difficult attempt does not surpass your courage.

“Would you have your husband constantly at your feet? keep him at some distance from your person. You will long maintain the authority in love, if you know but how to render your favours rare and valuable. It is thus you may employ even the arts of coquetry in the service of virtue, and those of love in that of reason.”

I shall close my extracts with a just description of a comfortable couple. “And yet you must not imagine, that even such management will always suffice. Whatever precaution be taken, enjoyment will, by degrees, take off the edge of passion. But when love hath lasted as long as possible, a pleasing habitude supplies its place, and the attachment of a mutual confidence succeeds to the transports of passion. Children often form a more agreeable and permanent connection between married people than even love itself. When you cease to be the mistress of Emilius, you will continue to be his wife and friend, you will be the mother of his children.”*

Children, he truly observes, form a much more permanent connexion between married people than love. Beauty, he declares, will not be valued, or even seen after a couple have lived six months together; artificial graces and coquetry will likewise pall on the senses: why then does he say that a girl should be educated for her husband with the same care as for an eastern haram?

I now appeal from the reveries of fancy and refined licentiousness to the good sense of mankind, whether, if the object of education be to prepare

*Rousseau’s Emilius.

women to become chaste wives and sensible mothers, the method so plausibly recommended in the foregoing sketch, be the one best calculated to produce those ends? Will it be allowed that the surest way to make a wife chaste, is to teach her to practise the wanton arts of a mistress, termed virtuous coquetry, by the sensualist who can no longer relish the artless charms of sincerity, or taste the pleasure arising from a tender intimacy, when confidence is unchecked by suspicion, and rendered interesting by sense?

The man who can be contented to live with a pretty, useful companion, without a mind, has lost in voluptuous gratifications a taste for more refined enjoyments; he has never felt the calm satisfaction, that refreshes the parched heart, like the silent dew of heaven,—of being beloved by one who could understand him.—In the society of his wife he is still alone, unless when the man is sunk in the brute. “The charm of life,” says a grave philosophical reasoner, is “sympathy; nothing pleases us more than to observe in other men a fellow-feeling with all the emotions of our own breast.”

But, according to the tenour of reasoning, by which women are kept from the tree of knowledge, the important years of youth, the usefulness of age, and the rational hopes of futurity, are all to be sacrificed to render women an object of desire for a *short* time. Besides, how could Rousseau expect them to be virtuous and constant when reason is neither allowed to be the foundation of their virtue, nor truth the object of their inquiries?

But all Rousseau’s errors in reasoning arose from sensibility, and sensibility to their charms women are very ready to forgive! When he should have reasoned he became impassioned, and reflection inflamed his imagination instead of enlightening his understanding. Even his virtues also led him farther astray; for, born with a warm constitution and lively fancy, nature carried him toward the other sex with such eager fondness, that he soon became lascivious. Had he given way to these desires, the fire would have extinguished itself in a natural manner; but virtue, and a romantic kind of delicacy, made him practise self-denial; yet, when fear, delicacy, or virtue, restrained him, he debauched his imagination, and reflecting on the sensations to which fancy gave force, he traced them in the most glowing colours, and sunk them deep into his soul.

He then sought for solitude, not to sleep with the man of nature; or calmly investigate the causes of things under the shade where Sir Isaac Newton indulged contemplation, but merely to indulge his feelings. And so warmly has he painted, what he forcibly felt, that, interesting the heart and inflaming the imagination of his readers; in proportion to the strength of their fancy, they imagine that their understanding is convinced when they only sympathize with a poetic writer, who skilfully exhibits the objects of sense, most

voluptuously shadowed or gracefully veiled—And thus making us feel whilst dreaming that we reason, erroneous conclusions are left in the mind.

Why was Rousseau's life divided between ecstasy and misery? Can any other answer be given than this, that the effervescence of his imagination produced both; but, had his fancy been allowed to cool, it is possible that he might have acquired more strength of mind. Still, if the purpose of life be to educate the intellectual part of man, all with respect to him was right; yet, had not death led to a nobler scene of action, it is probable that he would have enjoyed more equal happiness on earth, and have felt the calm sensations of the man of nature instead of being prepared for another stage of existence by nourishing the passions which agitate the civilized man.

But peace to his manes! I war not with his ashes, but his opinions. I war only with the sensibility that led him to degrade woman by making her the slave of love.

————— Curs'd vassalage,
First idoliz'd till love's hot fire be o'er,
Then slaves to those who courted us before.

Dryden.

The pernicious tendency of those books, in which the writers insidiously degrade the sex whilst they are prostrate before their personal charms, cannot be too often or too severely exposed.

Let us, my dear contemporaries, arise above such narrow prejudices! If wisdom be desirable on its own account, if virtue, to deserve the name, must be founded on knowledge; let us endeavour to strengthen our minds by reflection, till our heads become a balance for our hearts; let us not confine all our thoughts to the petty occurrences of the day, or our knowledge to an acquaintance with our lovers' or husbands' hearts; but let the practice of every duty be subordinate to the grand one of improving our minds, and preparing our affections for a more exalted state!

Beware then, my friends, of suffering the heart to be moved by every trivial incident; the reed is shaken by a breeze, and annually dies, but the oak stands firm, and for ages braves the storm!

Were we, indeed, only created to flutter our hour out and die—why let us then indulge sensibility, and laugh at the severity of reason.—Yet, alas! even then we should want strength of body and mind, and life would be lost in feverish pleasures or wearisome languor.

But the system of education, which I earnestly wish to see exploded, seems to presuppose what ought never to be taken for granted, that virtue

shields us from the casualties of life; and that fortune, slipping off her bandage, will smile on a well-educated female, and bring in her hand an Emilius or a Telemachus. Whilst, on the contrary, the reward which virtue promises to her votaries is confined, it seems clear, to their own bosoms; and often must they contend with the most vexatious worldly cares, and bear with the vices and humours of relations for whom they can never feel a friendship.

There have been many women in the world who, instead of being supported by the reason and virtue of their fathers and brothers, have strengthened their own minds by struggling with their vices and follies; yet have never met with a hero, in the shape of a husband; who, paying the debt that mankind owed them, might chance to bring back their reason to its natural dependent state, and restore the usurped prerogative, of rising above opinion, to man.

SECT. II.

Dr. Fordyce's sermons have long made a part of a young woman's library; nay, girls at school are allowed to read them; but I should instantly dismiss them from my pupil's, if I wished to strengthen her understanding, by leading her to form sound principles on a broad basis; or, were I only anxious to cultivate her taste; though they must be allowed to contain many sensible observations.

Dr. Fordyce may have had a very laudable end in view; but these discourses are written in such an affected style, that were it only on that account, and had I nothing to object against his *mellifluous* precepts, I should not allow girls to peruse them, unless I designed to hunt every spark of nature out of their composition, melting every human quality into female meekness and artificial grace. I say artificial, for true grace arises from some kind of independence of mind.

Children, careless of pleasing, and only anxious to amuse themselves, are often very graceful; and the nobility who have mostly lived with inferiours, and always had the command of money, acquire a graceful ease of deportment, which should rather be termed habitual grace of body, than that superiour gracefulness which is truly the expression of the mind. This mental grace, not noticed by vulgar eyes, often flashes across a rough countenance, and irradiating every feature, shows simplicity and independence of mind.—It is then we read characters of immortality in the eye, and see the soul in every gesture, though when at rest, neither the face nor limbs

may have much beauty to recommend them; or the behaviour, any thing peculiar to attract universal attention. The mass of mankind, however, look for more *tangible* beauty; yet simplicity is, in general, admired, when people do not consider what they admire; and can there be simplicity without sincerity? But, to have done with remarks that are in some measure desultory, though naturally excited by the subject—

In declamatory periods Dr. Fordyce spins out Rousseau's eloquence; and in most sentimental rant, details his opinions respecting the female character, and the behaviour which woman ought to assume to render her lovely.

He shall speak for himself, for thus he makes Nature address man. "Behold these smiling innocents, whom I have graced with my fairest gifts, and committed to your protection; behold them with love and respect; treat them with tenderness and honour. They are timid and want to be defended. They are frail; O do not take advantage of their weakness! Let their fears and blushes endear them. Let their confidence in you never be abused.—But is it possible, that any of you can be such barbarians, so supremely wicked, as to abuse it? Can you find in your hearts* to despoil the gentle, trusting creatures of their treasure, or do any thing to strip them of their native robe of virtue? Curst be the impious hand that would dare to violate the unblemished form of Charity! Thou wretch! thou ruffian! forbear; nor venture to provoke heaven's fiercest vengeance." I know not any comment that can be made seriously on this curious passage, and I could produce many similar ones; and some, so very sentimental, that I have heard rational men use the word indecent, when they mentioned them with disgust.

Throughout there is a display of cold artificial feelings, and that parade of sensibility which boys and girls should be taught to despise as the sure mark of a little vain mind. Florid appeals are made to heaven, and to the *beauteous innocents*, the fairest images of heaven here below, whilst sober sense is left far behind.—This is not the language of the heart, nor will it ever reach it, though the ear may be tickled.

I shall be told, perhaps, that the public have been pleased with these volumes.—True—and Hervey's Meditations are still read, though he equally sinned against sense and taste.

I particularly object to the lover-like phrases of pumped up passion, which are every where interspersed. If women be ever allowed to walk without leading-strings, why must they be cajoled into virtue by artful flattery and sexual compliments?—Speak to them the language of truth and

*Can you?—Can you? would be the most emphatical comment, were it drawled out in a whining voice.

soberness, and away with the lullaby strains of condescending endearment! Let them be taught to respect themselves as rational creatures, and not led to have a passion for their own insipid persons. It moves my gall to hear a preacher descanting on dress and needle-work; and still more, to hear him address the *British fair, the fairest of the fair*, as if they had only feelings.

Even recommending piety he uses the following argument. "Never, perhaps, does a fine woman strike more deeply, than when, composed into pious recollection, and possessed with the noblest considerations, she assumes, without knowing it, superiour dignity and new graces; so that the beauties of holiness seem to radiate about her, and the by-standers are almost induced to fancy her already worshipping amongst her kindred angels!" Why are women to be thus bred up with a desire of conquest? the very word, used in this sense, gives me a sickly qualm! Do religion and virtue offer no stronger motives, no brighter reward? Must they always be debased by being made to consider the sex of their companions? Must they be taught always to be pleasing? And when levelling their small artillery at the heart of man, is it necessary to tell them that a little sense is sufficient to render their attention *incredibly soothing*? "As a small degree of knowledge entertains in a woman, so from a woman, though for a different reason; a small expression of kindness delights, particularly if she have beauty!" I should have supposed for the same reason.

Why are girls to be told that they resemble angels; but to sink them below women? Or, that a gentle innocent female is an object that comes nearer to the idea which we have formed of angels than any other. Yet they are told, at the same time, that they are only like angels when they are young and beautiful; consequently, it is their persons, not their virtues, that procure them this homage.

Idle empty words! What can such delusive flattery lead to, but vanity and folly? The lover, it is true, has a poetical licence to exalt his mistress; his reason is the bubble of his passion, and he does not utter a falsehood when he borrows the language of adoration. His imagination may raise the idol of his heart, unblamed, above humanity; and happy would it be for women, if they were only flattered by the men who loved them; I mean, who love the individual, not the sex; but should a grave preacher interlard his discourses with such fooleries?

In sermons or novels, however, voluptuousness is always true to its text. Men are allowed by moralists to cultivate, as Nature directs, different qualities, and assume the different characters, that the same passions, modified almost to infinity, give to each individual. A virtuous man may have a cho-

leric or a sanguine constitution, be gay or grave, unreprieved; be firm till he is almost overbearing, or, weakly submissive, have no will or opinion of his own; but all women are to be levelled, by meekness and docility, into one character of yielding softness and gentle compliance.

I will use the preacher's own words. "Let it be observed, that in your sex manly exercises are never graceful; that in them a tone and figure, as well as an air and deportment, of the masculine kind, are always forbidding; and that men of sensibility desire in every woman soft features, and a flowing voice, a form, not robust, and demeanour delicate and gentle."

Is not the following portrait—the portrait of a house slave? "I am astonished at the folly of many women, who are still reproaching their husbands for leaving them alone, for preferring this or that company to theirs, for treating them with this and the other mark of disregard or indifference; when, to speak the truth, they have themselves in a great measure to blame. Not that I would justify the men in any thing wrong on their part. But had you behaved to them with more *respectful observance*, and a more *equal tenderness*; *studying their humours, overlooking their mistakes, submitting to their opinions* in matters indifferent, passing by little instances of unevenness, caprice, or passion, giving *soft* answers to hasty words, complaining as seldom as possible, and making it your daily care to relieve their anxieties and prevent their wishes, to enliven the hour of dulness, and call up the ideas of felicity: had you pursued this conduct, I doubt not but you would have maintained and even increased their esteem, so far as to have secured every degree of influence that could conduce to their virtue, or your mutual satisfaction; and your house might at this day have been the abode of domestic bliss." Such a woman ought to be an angel—or she is an ass—for I discern not a trace of the human character, neither reason nor passion in this domestic drudge, whose being is absorbed in that of a tyrant's.

Still Dr. Fordyce must have very little acquaintance with the human heart, if he really supposed that such conduct would bring back wandering love, instead of exciting contempt. No, beauty, gentleness, &c. &c. may gain a heart; but esteem, the only lasting affection, can alone be obtained by virtue supported by reason. It is respect for the understanding that keeps alive tenderness for the person.

As these volumes are so frequently put into the hands of young people, I have taken more notice of them than, strictly speaking, they deserve; but as they have contributed to vitiate the taste, and enervate the understanding of many of my fellow-creatures, I could not pass them silently over.

SECT. III.

Such paternal solicitude pervades Dr. Gregory's *Legacy to his Daughters*, that I enter on the task of criticism with affectionate respect; but as this little volume has many attractions to recommend it to the notice of the most respectable part of my sex, I cannot silently pass over arguments that so speciously support opinions which, I think, have had the most baneful effect on the morals and manners of the female world.

His easy familiar style is particularly suited to the tenor of his advice, and the melancholy tenderness which his respect for the memory of a beloved wife, diffuses through the whole work, renders it very interesting; yet there is a degree of concise elegance conspicuous in many passages that disturbs this sympathy; and we pop on the author, when we only expected to meet the—father.

Besides, having two objects in view, he seldom adhered steadily to either; for wishing to make his daughters amiable, and fearing lest unhappiness should only be the consequence, of instilling sentiments that might draw them out of the track of common life without enabling them to act with consonant independence and dignity, he checks the natural flow of his thoughts, and neither advises one thing nor the other.

In the preface he tells them a mournful truth, "that they will hear, at least once in their lives, the genuine sentiments of a man who has no interest in deceiving them."

Hapless woman! what can be expected from thee when the beings on whom thou art said naturally to depend for reason and support, have all an interest in deceiving thee! This is the root of the evil that has shed a corroding mildew on all thy virtues; and blighting in the bud thy opening faculties, has rendered thee the weak thing thou art! It is this separate interest—this insidious state of warfare, that undermines morality, and divides mankind!

If love have made some women wretched—how many more has the cold unmeaning intercourse of gallantry rendered vain and useless! yet this heartless attention to the sex is reckoned so manly, so polite that, till society is very differently organized, I fear, this vestige of gothic manners will not be done away by a more reasonable and affectionate mode of conduct. Besides, to strip it of its imaginary dignity, I must observe, that in the most uncivilized European states this lip-service prevails in a very great degree, accompanied with extreme dissoluteness of morals. In Portugal, the country that I particularly allude to, it takes place of the most serious moral obligations; for a man is seldom assassinated when in the company of a

woman. The savage hand of rapine is unnerved by this chivalrous spirit; and, if the stroke of vengeance cannot be stayed—the lady is entreated to pardon the rudeness and depart in peace, though sprinkled, perhaps, with her husband's or brother's blood.

I shall pass over his strictures on religion, because I mean to discuss that subject in a separate chapter.

The remarks relative to behaviour, though many of them very sensible, I entirely disapprove of, because it appears to me to be beginning, as it were, at the wrong end. A cultivated understanding, and an affectionate heart, will never want starched rules of decorum—something more substantial than seemliness will be the result; and, without understanding the behaviour here recommended, would be rank affectation. Decorum, indeed, is the one thing needful!—decorum is to supplant nature, and banish all simplicity and variety of character out of the female world. Yet what good end can all this superficial counsel produce? It is, however, much easier to point out this or that mode of behaviour, than to set the reason to work; but, when the mind has been stored with useful knowledge, and strengthened by being employed, the regulation of the behaviour may safely be left to its guidance.

Why, for instance, should the following caution be given when art of every kind must contaminate the mind; and why entangle the grand motives of action, which reason and religion equally combine to enforce, with pitiful worldly shifts and slight of hand tricks to gain the applause of gaping tasteless fools? “Be even cautious in displaying your good sense.* It will be thought you assume a superiority over the rest of the company—But if you happen to have any learning, keep it a profound secret, especially from the men who generally look with a jealous and malignant eye on a woman of great parts, and a cultivated understanding.” If men of real merit, as he afterwards observes, be superior to this meanness, where is the necessity that the behaviour of the whole sex should be modulated to please fools, or men, who having little claim to respect as individuals, choose to keep close in their phalanx. Men, indeed, who insist on their common superiority, having only this sexual superiority, are certainly very excusable.

There would be no end to rules for behaviour, if it be proper always to adopt the tone of the company; for thus, for ever varying the key, a *flat* would often pass for a *natural* note.

Surely it would have been wiser to have advised women to improve themselves till they rose above the fumes of vanity; and then to let the

*Let women once acquire good sense—and if it deserve the name, it will teach them; or, of what use will it be? how to employ it.

public opinion come round—for where are rules of accommodation to stop? The narrow path of truth and virtue inclines neither to the right nor left—it is a straight-forward business, and they who are earnestly pursuing their road, may bound over many decorous prejudices, without leaving modesty behind. Make the heart clean, and give the head employment, and I will venture to predict that there will be nothing offensive in the behaviour.

The air of fashion, which many young people are so eager to attain, always strikes me like the studied attitudes of some modern pictures, copied with tasteless servility after the antiques;—the soul is left out, and none of the parts are tied together by what may properly be termed character. This varnish of fashion, which seldom sticks very close to sense, may dazzle the weak; but leave nature to itself, and it will seldom disgust the wise. Besides, when a woman has sufficient sense not to pretend to any thing which she does not understand in some degree, there is no need of determining to hide her talents under a bushel. Let things take their natural course, and all will be well.

It is this system of dissimulation, throughout the volume, that I despise. Women are always to *seem* to be this and that—yet virtue might apostrophize them, in the words of Hamlet—Seems! I know not seems!—Have that within that passeth show!—

Still the same tone occurs; for in another place, after recommending, without sufficiently discriminating delicacy, he adds, “The men will complain of your reserve. They will assure you that a franker behaviour would make you more amiable. But, trust me, they are not sincere when they tell you so.—I acknowledge that on some occasions it might render you more agreeable as companions, but it would make you less amiable as women: an important distinction, which many of your sex are not aware of.”—

This desire of being always women, is the very consciousness that degrades the sex. Excepting with a lover, I must repeat with emphasis, a former observation,—it would be well if they were only agreeable or rational companions.—But in this respect his advice is even inconsistent with a passage which I mean to quote with the most marked approbation.

“The sentiment, that a woman may allow all innocent freedoms, provided her virtue is secure, is both grossly indelicate and dangerous, and has proved fatal to many of your sex.” With this opinion I perfectly coincide. A man, or a woman, of any feeling, must always wish to convince a beloved object that it is the caresses of the individual, not the sex, that are received and returned with pleasure; and, that the heart, rather than the senses, is

moved. Without this natural delicacy, love becomes a selfish personal gratification that soon degrades the character.

I carry this sentiment still further. Affection, when love is out of the question, authorizes many personal endearments; that naturally flowing from an innocent heart, give life to the behaviour; but the personal intercourse of appetite, gallantry, or vanity, is despicable. When a man squeezes the hand of a pretty woman, handing her to a carriage, whom he has never seen before, she will consider such an impertinent freedom in the light of an insult, if she have any true delicacy, instead of being flattered by this unmeaning homage to beauty. These are the privileges of friendship, or the momentary homage which the heart pays to virtue, when it flashes suddenly on the notice—mere animal spirits have no claim to the kindnesses of affection!

Wishing to feed the affections with what is now the food of vanity, I would fain persuade my sex to act from simpler principles. Let them merit love, and they will obtain it, though they may never be told that—"The power of a fine woman over the hearts of men, of men of the finest parts, is even beyond what she conceives."

I have already noticed the narrow cautions with respect to duplicity, female softness, delicacy of constitution; for these are the changes which he rings round without ceasing—in a more decorous manner, it is true, than Rousseau; but it all comes home to the same point, and whoever is at the trouble to analyze these sentiments, will find the first principles not quite so delicate as the superstructure.

The subject of amusements is treated in too cursory a manner; but with the same spirit.

When I treat of friendship, love, and marriage, it will be found that we materially differ in opinion; I shall not then forestall what I have to observe on these important subjects; but confine my remarks to the general tenor of them, to that cautious family prudence, to those confined views of partial unenlightened affection, which exclude pleasure and improvement, by vainly wishing to ward off sorrow and error—and by thus guarding the heart and mind, destroy also all their energy.—It is far better to be often deceived than never to trust; to be disappointed in love than never to love; to lose a husband's fondness than forfeit his esteem.

Happy would it be for the world, and for individuals, of course, if all this unavailing solicitude to attain worldly happiness, on a confined plan, were turned into an anxious desire to improve the understanding.—"Wisdom is the principal thing: *therefore* get wisdom; and with all thy gettings get

understanding.”—“How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and hate knowledge?” Saith Wisdom to the daughters of men!—

SECT. IV.

I do not mean to allude to all the writers who have written on the subject of female manners—it would, in fact, be only beating over the old ground, for they have, in general, written in the same strain; but attacking the boasted prerogative of man—the prerogative that may emphatically be called the iron sceptre of tyranny, the original sin of tyrants, I declare against all power built on prejudices, however hoary.

If the submission demanded be founded on justice—there is no appealing to a higher power—for God is Justice itself. Let us then, as children of the same parent, if not bastardized by being the younger born, reason together, and learn to submit to the authority of reason—when her voice is distinctly heard. But, if it be proved, that this throne of prerogative only rests on a chaotic mass of prejudices, that have no inherent principle of order to keep them together, or on an elephant, tortoise, or even the mighty shoulders of a son of the earth, they may escape, who dare to brave the consequence, without any breach of duty, without sinning against the order of things.

Whilst reason raises man above the brutal herd, and death is big with promises, they alone are subject to blind authority who have no reliance on their own strength. They are free—who will be free!*

The being who can govern itself has nothing to fear in life; but if any thing be dearer than its own respect, the price must be paid to the last farthing. Virtue, like every thing valuable, must be loved for herself alone; or she will not take up her abode with us. She will not impart that peace, “which passeth understanding,” when she is merely made the stilts of reputation; and respected, with pharisaical exactness, because “honesty is the best policy.”

That the plan of life which enables us to carry some knowledge and virtue into another world, is the one best calculated to ensure content in this, cannot be denied; yet few people act according to this principle, though it be universally allowed that it admits not of dispute. Present pleasure, or present power, carry before it these sober convictions; and it is for the day,

*“He is the free man, whom the *truth* makes free!”

not for life, that man bargains with happiness. How few!—how very few! have sufficient foresight, or resolution, to endure a small evil at the moment, to avoid a greater hereafter.

Woman in particular, whose virtue* is built on mutable prejudices, seldom attains to this greatness of mind; so that, becoming the slave of her own feelings, she is easily subjugated by those of others. Thus degraded, her reason, her misty reason! is employed rather to burnish than to snap her chains.

Indignantly have I heard women argue in the same track as men, and adopt the sentiments that brutalize them, with all the pertinacity of ignorance.

I must illustrate my assertion by a few examples. Mrs. Piozzi, who often repeated by rote, what she did not understand, comes forward with Johnsonian periods.

“Seek not for happiness in singularity; and dread a refinement of wisdom as a deviation into folly.” Thus she dogmatically addresses a new married man; and to elucidate this pompous exordium, she adds, “I said that the person of your lady would not grow more pleasing to you, but pray let her never suspect that it grows less so: that a woman will pardon an affront to her understanding much sooner than one to her person, is well known; nor will any of us contradict the assertion. All our attainments, all our arts, are employed to gain and keep the heart of man; and what mortification can exceed the disappointment, if the end be not obtained? There is no reproof however pointed, no punishment however severe, that a woman of spirit will not prefer to neglect; and if she can endure it without complaint, it only proves that she means to make herself amends by the attention of others for the slights of her husband!”

These are truly masculine sentiments.—“All our *arts* are employed to gain and keep the heart of man:”—and what is the inference?—if her person, and was there ever a person, though formed with Medicean symmetry, that was not slighted? be neglected, she will make herself amends by endeavouring to please other men. Noble morality! But thus is the understanding of the whole sex affronted, and their virtue deprived of the common basis of virtue. A woman must know, that her person cannot be as pleasing to her husband as it was to her lover, and if she be offended with him for being a human creature, she may as well whine about the loss of his heart as about any other foolish thing.—And this very want of discernment or unreasonable anger, proves that he could not change his fondness for her person into affection for her virtues or respect for her understanding.

*I mean to use a word that comprehends more than chastity the sexual virtue.

Whilst women avow, and act up to such opinions, their understandings, at least, deserve the contempt and obloquy that men, *who never* insult their persons, have pointedly levelled at the female mind. And it is the sentiments of these polite men, who do not wish to be encumbered with mind, that vain women thoughtlessly adopt. Yet they should know, that insulted reason alone can spread that *sacred* reserve about the person, which renders human affections, for human affections have always some base alloy, as permanent as is consistent with the grand end of existence—the attainment of virtue.

The Baroness de Stael speaks the same language as the lady just cited, with more enthusiasm. Her eulogium on Rousseau was accidentally put into my hands, and her sentiments, the sentiments of too many of my sex, may serve as the text for a few comments. “Though Rousseau,” she observes, “has endeavoured to prevent women from interfering in public affairs, and acting a brilliant part in the theatre of politics; yet in speaking of them, how much has he done it to their satisfaction! If he wished to deprive them of some rights foreign to their sex, how has he ever restored to them all those to which it has a claim! And in attempting to diminish their influence over the deliberations of men, how sacredly has he established the empire they have over their happiness! In aiding them to descend from an usurped throne, he has firmly seated them upon that to which they were destined by nature; and though he be full of indignation against them when they endeavour to resemble men, yet when they come before him with all the *charms, weaknesses, virtues and errors*, of their sex, his respect for their *persons* amounts almost to adoration.” True!—For never was there a sensualist who paid more fervent adoration at the shrine of beauty. So devout, indeed, was his respect for the person, that excepting the virtue of chastity, for obvious reasons, he only wished to see it embellished by charms, weaknesses, and errors. He was afraid lest the austerity of reason should disturb the soft playfulness of love. The master wished to have a meretricious slave to fondle, entirely dependent on his reason and bounty; he did not want a companion, whom he should be compelled to esteem, or a friend to whom he could confide the care of his children’s education, should death deprive them of their father, before he had fulfilled the sacred task. He denies woman reason, shuts her out from knowledge, and turns her aside from truth; yet his pardon is granted, because “he admits the passion of love.” It would require some ingenuity to shew why women were to be under such an obligation to him for thus admitting love; when it is clear that he admits it only for the relaxation of men, and to perpetuate the species; but he talked

with passion, and that powerful spell worked on the sensibility of a young encomiast. "What signifies it," pursues this rhapsodist, "to women, that his reason disputes with them the empire, when his heart is devotedly theirs." It is not empire,—but equality, that they should contend for. Yet, if they only wished to lengthen out their sway, they should not entirely trust to their persons, for though beauty may gain a heart, it cannot keep it, even while the beauty is in full bloom, unless the mind lend, at least, some graces.

When women are once sufficiently enlightened to discover their real interest, on a grand scale, they will, I am persuaded, be very ready to resign all the prerogatives of love, that are not mutual, speaking of them as lasting prerogatives, for the calm satisfaction of friendship, and the tender confidence of habitual esteem. Before marriage they will not assume any insolent airs, or afterwards abjectly submit; but endeavouring to act like reasonable creatures, in both situations, they will not be tumbled from a throne to a stool.

Madame Genlis has written several entertaining books for children; and her Letters on Education afford many useful hints, that sensible parents will certainly avail themselves of; but her views are narrow, and her prejudices as unreasonable as strong.

I shall pass over her vehement argument in favour of the eternity of future punishments, because I blush to think that a human being should ever argue vehemently in such a cause, and only make a few remarks on her absurd manner of making the parental authority supplant reason. For every where does she inculcate not only *blind* submission to parents; but to the opinion of the world.*

She tells a story of a young man engaged by his father's express desire to a girl of fortune. Before the marriage could take place, she is deprived of her fortune, and thrown friendless on the world. The father practices the most infamous arts to separate his son from her, and when the son detects his villany, and following the dictates of honour marries the girl, nothing but misery ensues, because forsooth he married *without* his father's consent. On what ground can religion or morality rest when justice is thus set

*A person is not to act in this or that way, though convinced they are right in so doing, because some equivocal circumstances may lead the world to *suspect* that they acted from different motives.—This is sacrificing the substance for a shadow. Let people but watch their own hearts, and act rightly, as far as they can judge, and they may patiently wait till the opinion of the world comes round. It is best to be directed by a simple motive—for justice has too often been sacrificed to propriety;—another word for convenience.

at defiance? With the same view she represents an accomplished young woman, as ready to marry any body that her *mamma* pleased to recommend; and, as actually marrying the young man of her own choice, without feeling any emotions of passion, because that a well educated girl had not time to be in love. Is it possible to have much respect for a system of education that thus insults reason and nature?

Many similar opinions occur in her writings, mixed with sentiments that do honour to her head and heart. Yet so much superstition is mixed with her religion, and so much worldly wisdom with her morality, that I should not let a young person read her works, unless I could afterwards converse on the subjects, and point out the contradictions.

Mrs. Chapone's Letters are written with such good sense, and unaffected humility, and contain so many useful observations, that I only mention them to pay the worthy writer this tribute of respect. I cannot, it is true, always coincide in opinion with her; but I always respect her.

The very word respect brings Mrs. Macaulay to my remembrance. The woman of the greatest abilities, undoubtedly, that this country has ever produced.—And yet this woman has been suffered to die without sufficient respect being paid to her memory.

Posterity, however, will be more just; and remember that Catharine Macaulay was an example of intellectual acquirements supposed to be incompatible with the weakness of her sex. In her style of writing, indeed, no sex appears, for it is like the sense it conveys, strong and clear.

I will not call hers a masculine understanding, because I admit not of such an arrogant assumption of reason; but I contend that it was a sound one, and that her judgment, the matured fruit of profound thinking, was a proof that a woman can acquire judgment, in the full extent of the word. Possessing more penetration than sagacity, more understanding than fancy, she writes with sober energy and argumentative closeness; yet sympathy and benevolence give an interest to her sentiments, and that vital heat to arguments, which forces the reader to weigh them.*

When I first thought of writing these strictures I anticipated Mrs. Macaulay's approbation, with a little of that sanguine ardour, which it has been the business of my life to depress; but soon heard with the sickly qualm of disappointed hope; and the still seriousness of regret—that she was no more!

*Coinciding in opinion with Mrs. Macaulay relative to many branches of education, I refer to her valuable work, instead of quoting her sentiments to support my own.

SECT. V.

Taking a view of the different works which have been written on education, Lord Chesterfield's Letters must not be silently passed over. Not that I mean to analyze his unmanly, immoral system, or even to cull any of the useful, shrewd remarks which occur in his epistles—No, I only mean to make a few reflections on the avowed tendency of them—the art of acquiring an early knowledge of the world. An art, I will venture to assert, that preys secretly, like the worm in the bud, on the expanding powers, and turns to poison the generous juices which should mount with vigour in the youthful frame, inspiring warm affections and great resolves.*

For every thing, saith the wise man, there is a season;—and who would look for the fruits of autumn during the genial months of spring? But this is mere declamation, and I mean to reason with those worldly-wise instructors, who, instead of cultivating the judgment, instill prejudices, and render hard the heart that gradual experience would only have cooled. An early acquaintance with human infirmities; or, what is termed knowledge of the world, is the surest way, in my opinion, to contract the heart and damp the natural youthful ardour which produces not only great talents, but great virtues. For the vain attempt to bring forth the fruit of experience, before the sapling has thrown out its leaves, only exhausts its strength, and prevents its assuming a natural form; just as the form and strength of subsiding metals are injured when the attraction of cohesion is disturbed.

Tell me, ye who have studied the human mind, is it not a strange way to fix principles by showing young people that they are seldom stable? And how can they be fortified by habits when they are proved to be fallacious by example? Why is the ardour of youth thus to be damped, and the luxuriancy of fancy cut to the quick? This dry caution may, it is true, guard a character from worldly mischances; but will infallibly preclude excellence in either virtue or knowledge.† The stumbling-block thrown across every path by suspicion, will prevent any vigorous exertions of genius or benevolence, and life will be stripped of its most alluring charm long before its calm evening, when man should retire to contemplation for comfort and support.

*That children ought to be constantly guarded against the vices and follies of the world, appears, to me, a very mistaken opinion; for in the course of my experience, and my eyes have looked abroad, I never knew a youth educated in this manner, who had early imbibed these chilling suspicions, and repeated by rote the hesitating *if* of age, that did not prove a selfish character.

†I have already observed that an early knowledge of the world, obtained in a natural way, by mixing in the world, has the same effect: instancing officers and women.

A young man who has been bred up with domestic friends, and led to store his mind with as much speculative knowledge as can be acquired by reading and the natural reflections which youthful ebullitions of animal spirits and instinctive feelings inspire, will enter the world with warm and erroneous expectations. But this appears to be the course of nature; and in morals, as well as in works of taste, we should be observant of her sacred indications, and not presume to lead when we ought obsequiously to follow.

In the world few people act from principle; present feelings, and early habits, are the grand springs: but how would the former be deadened, and the latter rendered iron corroding fetters, if the world were shewn to young people just as it is; when no knowledge of mankind or their own hearts, slowly obtained by experience, rendered them forbearing? Their fellow creatures would not then be viewed as frail beings; like themselves, condemned to struggle with human infirmities, and sometimes displaying the light, and sometimes the dark side of their character; extorting alternate feelings of love and disgust; but guarded against as beasts of prey, till every enlarged social feeling, in a word,—humanity, was eradicated.

In life, on the contrary, as we gradually discover the imperfections of our nature, we discover virtues, and various circumstances attach us to our fellow creatures, when we mix with them, and view the same objects, that are never thought of in acquiring a hasty unnatural knowledge of the world. We see a folly swell into a vice, by almost imperceptible degrees, and pity while we blame; but, if the hideous monster burst suddenly on our sight, fear and disgust rendering us more severe than man ought to be, might lead us with blind zeal to usurp the character of omnipotence, and denounce damnation on our fellow mortals, forgetting that we cannot read the heart, and that we have seeds of the same vices lurking in our own.

I have already remarked that we expect more from instruction, than mere instruction can produce: for, instead of preparing young people to encounter the evils of life with dignity, and to acquire wisdom and virtue by the exercise of their own faculties, precepts are heaped upon precepts, and blind obedience required, when conviction should be brought home to reason.

Suppose, for instance, that a young person in the first ardour of friendship deifies the beloved object—what harm can arise from this mistaken enthusiastic attachment? Perhaps it is necessary for virtue first to appear in a human form to impress youthful hearts; the ideal model, which a more matured and exalted mind looks up to, and shapes for itself, would elude

their fight. He who loves not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God? asked the wisest of men.

It is natural for youth to adorn the first object of its affection with every good quality, and the emulation produced by ignorance, or, to speak with more propriety, by inexperience, brings forward the mind capable of forming such an affection, and when, in the lapse of time, perfection is found not to be within the reach of mortals, virtue, abstractedly, is thought beautiful, and wisdom sublime. Admiration then gives place to friendship, properly so called, because it is cemented by esteem; and the being walks alone only dependent on heaven for that emulous panting after perfection which ever glows in a noble mind. But this knowledge a man must gain by the exertion of his own faculties; and this is surely the blessed fruit of disappointed hope! for He who delighteth to diffuse happiness and shew mercy to the weak creatures, who are learning to know him, never implanted a good propensity to be a tormenting *ignis fatuus*.

Our trees are now allowed to spread with wild luxuriance, nor do we expect by force to combine the majestic marks of time with youthful graces; but wait patiently till they have struck deep their root, and braved many a storm.—Is the mind then, which, in proportion to its dignity, advances more slowly towards perfection, to be treated with less respect? To argue from analogy, every thing around us is in a progressive state; and when an unwelcome knowledge of life produces almost a satiety of life, and we discover by the natural course of things that all that is done under the sun is vanity, we are drawing near the awful close of the drama. The days of activity and hope are over, and the opportunities which the first stage of existence has afforded of advancing in the scale of intelligence, must soon be summed up.—A knowledge at this period of the futility of life, or earlier, if obtained by experience, is very useful, because it is natural; but when a frail being is shewn the follies and vices of man, that he may be taught prudently to guard against the common casualties of life by sacrificing his heart—surely it is not speaking harshly to call it the wisdom of this world, contrasted with the nobler fruit of piety and experience.

I will venture a paradox, and deliver my opinion without reserve; if men were only born to form a circle of life and death, it would be wise to take every step that foresight could suggest to render life happy. Moderation in every pursuit would then be supreme wisdom; and the prudent voluptuary might enjoy a degree of content, though he neither cultivated his understanding nor kept his heart pure. Prudence, supposing we were mortal, would be true wisdom, or, to be more explicit, would procure the greatest

portion of happiness considering the whole of life, but knowledge beyond the conveniences of life would be a curse.

Why should we injure our health by close study? The exalted pleasure which intellectual pursuits afford would scarcely be equivalent to the hours of languor that follow; especially, if it be necessary to take into the reckoning the doubts and disappointments that cloud our researches. Vanity and vexation close every inquiry: for the cause which we particularly wished to discover flies like the horizon before us as we advance. The ignorant, on the contrary, resemble children, and suppose, that if they could walk straight forward they should at last arrive where the earth and clouds meet. Yet, disappointed as we are in our researches, the mind gains strength by the exercise, sufficient, perhaps, to comprehend the answers which, in another step of existence, it may receive to the anxious questions it asked, when the understanding with feeble wing was fluttering round the visible effects to dive into the hidden cause.

The passions also, the winds of life, would be useless, if not injurious, did the substance which composes our thinking being, after we have thought in vain, only become the support of vegetable life, and invigorate a cabbage, or blush in a rose. The appetites would answer every earthly purpose, and produce more moderate and permanent happiness. But the powers of the soul that are of little use here, and, probably, disturb our animal enjoyments, even while conscious dignity makes us glory in possessing them, prove that life is merely an education, a state of infancy, to which the only hopes worth cherishing should not be sacrificed. I mean, therefore, to infer, that we ought to have a precise idea of what we wish to attain by education, for the immortality of the soul is contradicted by the actions of many people who firmly profess the belief.

If you mean to secure ease and prosperity on earth as the first consideration, and leave futurity to provide for itself; you act prudently in giving your child an early insight into the weaknesses of his nature. You may not, it is true, make an Inkle of him; but do not imagine that he will stick to more than the letter of the law, who has very early imbibed a mean opinion of human nature; nor will he think it necessary to rise much above the common standard. He may avoid gross vices, because honesty is the best policy; but he will never aim at attaining great virtues. The example of writers and artists will illustrate this remark.

I must therefore venture to doubt whether what has been thought an axiom in morals may not have been a dogmatical assertion made by men who have coolly seen mankind through the medium of books, and say, in direct contradiction to them, that the regulation of the passions is not, always,

wisdom.—On the contrary, it should seem, that one reason why men have superiour judgment, and more fortitude than women, is undoubtedly this, that they give a freer scope to the grand passions, and by more frequently going astray enlarge their minds. If then by the exercise of their own* reason they fix on some stable principle, they have probably to thank the force of their passions, nourished by *false* views of life, and permitted to overlap the boundary that secures content. But if, in the dawn of life, we could soberly survey the scenes before as in perspective, and see every thing in its true colours, how could the passions gain sufficient strength to unfold the faculties?

Let me now as from an eminence survey the world stripped of all its false delusive charms. The clear atmosphere enables me to see each object in its true point of view, while my heart is still. I am calm as the prospect in a morning when the mists, slowly dispersing, silently unveil the beauties of nature, refreshed by rest.

In what light will the world now appear?—I rub my eyes and think, perchance, that I am just awaking from a lively dream.

I see the sons and daughters of men pursuing shadows, and anxiously wasting their powers to feed passions which have no adequate object—if the very excess of these blind impulses, pampered by that lying, yet constantly trusted guide, the imagination, did not, by preparing them for some other state, render short-sighted mortals wiser without their own concurrence; or, what comes to the same thing, when they were pursuing some imaginary present good.

After viewing objects in this light, it would not be very fanciful to imagine that this world was a stage on which a pantomime is daily performed for the amusement of superiour beings. How would they be diverted to see the ambitious man consuming himself by running after a phantom, and, “pursuing the bubble fame in the cannon’s mouth” that was to blow him to nothing: for when consciousness is lost, it matters not whether we mount in a whirlwind or descend in rain. And should they compassionately invigorate his sight and shew him the thorny path which led to eminence, that like a quicksand sinks as he ascends, disappointing his hopes when almost within his grasp, would he not leave to others the honour of amusing them, and labour to secure the present moment, though from the constitution of his nature he would not find it very easy to catch the flying stream? Such slaves are we to hope and fear!

But, vain as the ambitious man’s pursuits would be, he is often striving for something more substantial than fame—that indeed would be the

*“I find that all is but lip-wisdom which wants experience,” says Sidney.

veriest meteor, the wildest fire that could lure a man to ruin.—What! renounce the most trifling gratification to be applauded when he should be no more! Wherefore this struggle, whether man be mortal or immortal, if that noble passion did not really raise the being above his fellows?—

And love! What diverting scenes would it produce—Pantaloön's tricks must yield to more egregious folly. To see a mortal adorn an object with imaginary charms, and then fall down and worship the idol which he had himself set up—how ridiculous! But what serious consequences ensue to rob man of that portion of happiness, which the Deity by calling him into existence has (or, on what can his attributes rest?) indubitably promised; would not all the purposes of life have been much better fulfilled if he had only felt what has been termed physical love? And, would not the sight of the object, not seen through the medium of the imagination, soon reduce the passion to an appetite, if reflection, the noble distinction of man, did not give it force, and make it an instrument to raise him above this earthy dross, by teaching him to love the centre of all perfection; whose wisdom appears clearer and clearer in the works of nature, in proportion as reason is illuminated and exalted by contemplation, and by acquiring that love of order which the struggles of passion produce?

The habit of reflection, and the knowledge attained by fostering any passion, might be shewn to be equally useful, though the object be proved equally fallacious; for they would all appear in the same light, if they were not magnified by the governing passion implanted in us by the Author of all good, to call forth and strengthen the faculties of each individual, and enable it to attain all the experience that an infant can obtain, who does certain things, it cannot tell why.

I descend from my height, and mixing with my fellow-creatures, feel myself hurried along the common stream; ambition, love, hope, and fear, exert their wonted power, though we be convinced by reason that their present and most attractive promises are only lying dreams; but had the cold hand of circumspection damped each generous feeling before it had left any permanent character, or fixed some habit, what could be expected, but selfish prudence and reason just rising above instinct? Who that has read Dean Swift's disgusting description of the Yahoos, and insipid one of Houyhnhnm with a philosophical eye, can avoid seeing the futility of degrading the passions, or making man rest in contentment?

The youth should *act*; for had he the experience of a grey head he would be fitter for death than life, though his virtues, rather residing in his head than his heart, could produce nothing great, and his understanding, prepared for this world, would not, by its noble flights, prove that it had a title to a better.

Besides, it is not possible to give a young person a just view of life; he must have struggled with his own passions before he can estimate the force of the temptation which betrayed his brother into vice. Those who are entering life, and those who are departing, see the world from such very different points of view, that they can seldom think alike, unless the unfledged reason of the former never attempted a solitary flight.

When we hear of some daring crime—it comes full on us in the deepest shade of turpitude, and raises indignation; but the eye that gradually saw the darkness thicken, must observe it with more compassionate forbearance. The world cannot be seen by an unmoved spectator, we must mix in the throng, and feel as men feel before we can judge of their feelings. If we mean, in short, to live in the world to grow wiser and better, and not merely to enjoy the good things of life, we must attain a knowledge of others at the same time that we become acquainted with ourselves—knowledge acquired any other way only hardens the heart and perplexes the understanding.

I may be told, that the knowledge thus acquired, is sometimes purchased at too dear a rate. I can only answer that I very much doubt whether any knowledge can be attained without labour and sorrow; and those who wish to spare their children both, should not complain, if they are neither wise nor virtuous. They only aimed at making them prudent; and prudence, early in life, is but the cautious craft of ignorant self-love.

I have observed that young people, to whose education particular attention has been paid, have, in general, been very superficial and conceited; and far from pleasing in any respect, because they had neither the unsuspecting warmth of youth, nor the cool depth of age. I cannot help imputing this unnatural appearance principally to that hasty premature instruction, which leads them presumptuously to repeat all the crude notions they have taken upon trust, so that the careful education which they received, makes them all their lives the slaves of prejudices.

Mental as well as bodily exertion is, at first, irksome; so much so, that the many would fain let others both work and think for them. An observation which I have often made will illustrate my meaning. When in a circle of strangers, or acquaintances, a person of moderate abilities asserts an opinion with heat, I will venture to affirm, for I have traced this fact home, very often, that it is a prejudice. These echoes have a high respect for the understanding of some relation or friend, and without fully comprehending the opinions, which they are so eager to retail, they maintain them with a degree of obstinacy, that would surprise even the person who concocted them.

I know that a kind of fashion now prevails of respecting prejudices; and when any one dares to face them, though actuated by humanity and armed by reason, he is superciliously asked whether his ancestors were fools. No, I should reply; opinions, at first, of every description, were all, probably, considered, and therefore were founded on some reason; yet not unfrequently, of course, it was rather a local expedient than a fundamental principle, that would be reasonable at all times. But, moss-covered opinions assume the disproportioned form of prejudices, when they are indolently adopted only because age has given them a venerable aspect, though the reason on which they were built ceases to be a reason, or cannot be traced. Why are we to love prejudices, merely because they are prejudices? * A prejudice is a fond obstinate persuasion for which we can give no reason; for the moment a reason can be given for an opinion, it ceases to be a prejudice, though it may be an error in judgment: and are we then advised to cherish opinions only to set reason at defiance? This mode of arguing, if arguing it may be called, reminds me of what is vulgarly termed a woman's reason. For women sometimes declare that they love, or believe, certain things, *because* they love, or believe them.

It is impossible to converse with people to any purpose, who only use affirmatives and negatives. Before you can bring them to a point, to start fairly from, you must go back to the simple principles that were antecedent to the prejudices broached by power; and it is ten to one but you are stopped by the philosophical assertion, that certain principles are as practically false as they are abstractly true. † Nay, it may be inferred, that reason has whispered some doubts, for it generally happens that people assert their opinions with the greatest heat when they begin to waver; striving to drive out their own doubts by convincing their opponent, they grow angry when those gnawing doubts are thrown back to prey on themselves.

The fact is, that men expect from education, what education cannot give. A sagacious parent or tutor may strengthen the body and sharpen the instruments by which the child is to gather knowledge; but the honey must be the reward of the individual's own industry. It is almost as absurd to attempt to make a youth wise by the experience of another, as to expect the body to grow strong by the exercise which is only talked of, or seen. ‡ Many of those children whose conduct has been most narrowly watched,

*Vide Mr. Burke.

†“Convince a man against his will,
He's of the same opinion still.”

‡“One sees nothing when one is content to contemplate only; it is necessary to act oneself to be able to see how others act.” *Rousseau*.

become the weakest men; because their instructors only instill certain notions into their minds, that have no other foundation than their authority; and if they be loved or respected, the mind is cramped in its exertions and wavering in its advances. The business of education in this case, is only to conduct the shooting tendrils to a proper pole; yet after laying precept upon precept, without allowing a child to acquire judgment itself, parents expect them to act in the same manner by this borrowed fallacious light, as if they had illuminated it themselves; and be, when they enter life, what their parents are at the close. They do not consider that the tree, and even the human body, does not strengthen its fibres till it has reached its full growth.

There appears to be something analogous in the mind. The senses and the imagination give a form to the character, during childhood and youth; and the understanding, as life advances, gives firmness to the first fair purposes of sensibility—till virtue, arising rather from the clear conviction of reason than the impulse of the heart, morality is made to rest on a rock against which the storms of passion vainly beat.

I hope I shall not be misunderstood when I say, that religion will not have this condensing energy, unless it be founded on reason. If it be merely the refuge of weakness or wild fanaticism, and not a governing principle of conduct, drawn from self-knowledge, and a rational opinion respecting the attributes of God, what can it be expected to produce? The religion which consists in warming the affections, and exalting the imagination, is only the poetical part, and may afford the individual pleasure without rendering it a more moral being. It may be a substitute for worldly pursuits; yet narrow, instead of enlarging the heart: but virtue must be loved as in itself sublime and excellent, and not for the advantages it procures or the evils it averts, if any great degree of excellence be expected. Men will not become moral when they only build airy castles in a future world to compensate for the disappointments which they meet with in this; if they turn their thoughts from relative duties to religious reveries.

Most prospects in life are marred by the shuffling worldly wisdom of men, who, forgetting that they cannot serve God and mammon, endeavour to blend contradictory things.—If you wish to make your son rich, pursue one course—if you are only anxious to make him virtuous, you must take another; but do not imagine that you can bound from one road to the other without losing your way.*

*See an excellent essay on this subject by Mrs. Barbauld in *Miscellaneous Pieces in Prose*.

CHAP. VI.

THE EFFECT WHICH AN EARLY
ASSOCIATION OF IDEAS HAS UPON
THE CHARACTER.

Educated in the enervating style recommended by the writers on whom I have been animadverting; and not having a chance, from their subordinate state in society, to recover their lost ground, is it surprising that women every where appear a defect in nature? Is it surprising, when we consider what a determinate effect an early association of ideas has on the character, that they neglect their understandings, and turn all their attention to their persons?

The great advantages which naturally result from storing the mind with knowledge, are obvious from the following considerations. The association of our ideas is either habitual or instantaneous; and the latter mode seems rather to depend on the original temperature of the mind than on the will. When the ideas, and matters of fact, are once taken in, they lie by for use, till some fortuitous circumstance makes the information dart into the mind with illustrative force, that has been received at very different periods of our lives. Like the lightning's flash are many recollections; one idea assimilating and explaining another, with astonishing rapidity. I do not now allude to that quick perception of truth, which is so intuitive that it baffles research, and makes us at a loss to determine whether it is reminiscence or ratiocination, lost sight of in its celerity, that opens the dark cloud. Over

those instantaneous associations we have little power; for when the mind is once enlarged by excursive flights, or profound reflection, the raw materials will, in some degree, arrange themselves. The understanding, it is true, may keep us from going out of drawing when we group our thoughts, or transcribe from the imagination the warm sketches of fancy; but the animal spirits, the individual character, give the colouring. Over this subtle electric fluid,* how little power do we possess, and over it how little power can reason obtain! These fine intractable spirits appear to be the essence of genius, and beaming in its eagle eye, produce in the most eminent degree the happy energy of associating thoughts that surprise, delight, and instruct. These are the glowing minds that concentrate pictures for their fellow-creatures; forcing them to view with interest the objects reflected from the impassioned imagination, which they passed over in nature.

I must be allowed to explain myself. The generality of people cannot see or feel poetically, they want fancy, and therefore fly from solitude in search of sensible objects; but when an author lends them his eyes they can see as he saw, and be amused by images they could not select, though lying before them.

Education thus only supplies the man of genius with knowledge to give variety and contrast to his associations; but there is an habitual association of ideas, that grows "with our growth," which has a great effect on the moral character of mankind; and by which a turn is given to the mind that commonly remains throughout life. So ductile is the understanding, and yet so stubborn, that the associations which depend on adventitious circumstances, during the period that the body takes to arrive at maturity, can seldom be disentangled by reason. One idea calls up another, its old associate, and memory, faithful to the first impressions, particularly when the intellectual powers are not employed to cool our sensations, retraces them with mechanical exactness.

This habitual slavery, to first impressions, has a more baneful effect on the female than the male character, because business and other dry employments of the understanding, tend to deaden the feelings, and break associations that do violence to reason. But females, who are made women of when they are mere children, and brought back to childhood when they

*I have sometimes, when inclined to laugh at materialists, asked whether, as the most powerful effects in nature are apparently produced by fluids, the magnetic, &c. the passions might not be fine volatile fluids that embraced humanity, keeping the more refractory elementary parts together—or whether they were simply a liquid fire that pervaded the more sluggish materials, giving them life and heat!

ought to leave the go-cart for ever, have not sufficient strength of mind to efface the superinductions of art that have smothered nature.

Every thing that they see or hear serves to fix impressions, call forth emotions, and associate ideas, that give a sexual character to the mind. False notions of beauty and delicacy stop the growth of their limbs and produce a sickly soreness, rather than delicacy of organs; and thus weakened by being employed in unfolding instead of examining the first associations, forced on them by every surrounding object, how can they attain the vigour necessary to enable them to throw off their factitious character?—where find strength to recur to reason and rise superiour to a system of oppression, that blasts the fair promises of spring? This cruel association of ideas, which every thing conspires to twist into all their habits of thinking, or, to speak with more precision, of feeling, receives new force when they begin to act a little for themselves; for they then perceive that it is only through their address to excite emotions in men, that pleasure and power are to be obtained. Besides, the books professedly written for their instruction, which make the first impression on their minds, all inculcate the same opinions. Educated then in worse than Egyptian bondage, it is unreasonable, as well as cruel, to upbraid them with faults that can scarcely be avoided, unless a degree of native vigour be supposed, that falls to the lot of very few amongst mankind.

For instance, the severest sarcasms have been levelled against the sex, and they have been ridiculed for repeating “a set of phrases learnt by rote,” when nothing could be more natural, considering the education they receive, and that their “highest praise is to obey, unargued”—the will of man. If they be not allowed to have reason sufficient to govern their own conduct—why, all they learn—must be learned by rote! And when all their ingenuity is called forth to adjust their dress, “a passion for a scarlet coat,” is so natural, that it never surprised me; and, allowing Pope’s summary of their character to be just, “that every woman is at heart a rake,” why should they be bitterly censured for seeking a congenial mind, and preferring a rake to a man of sense?

Rakes know how to work on their sensibility, whilst the modest merit of reasonable men has, of course, less effect on their feelings, and they cannot reach the heart by the way of the understanding, because they have few sentiments in common.

It seems a little absurd to expect women to be more reasonable than men in their *likings*, and still to deny them the uncontroled use of reason. When do men *fall-in-love* with sense? When do they, with their superiour powers and advantages, turn from the person to the mind? And how can

they then expect women, who are only taught to observe behaviour, and acquire manners rather than morals, to despise what they have been all their lives labouring to attain? Where are they suddenly to find judgment enough to weigh patiently the sense of an awkward virtuous man, when his manners, of which they are made critical judges, are rebuffing, and his conversation cold and dull, because it does not consist of pretty repartees, or well turned compliments? In order to admire or esteem any thing for a continuance, we must, at least, have our curiosity excited by knowing, in some degree, what we admire; for we are unable to estimate the value of qualities and virtues above our comprehension. Such a respect, when it is felt, may be very sublime; and the confused consciousness of humility may render the dependent creature an interesting object, in some points of view; but human love must have grosser ingredients; and the person very naturally will come in for its share—and, an ample share it mostly has!

Love is, in a great degree, an arbitrary passion, and will reign, like some other stalking mischiefs, by its own authority, without deigning to reason; and it may also be easily distinguished from esteem, the foundation of friendship, because it is often excited by evanescent beauties and graces, though, to give an energy to the sentiment, something more solid must deepen their impression and set the imagination to work, to make the most fair—the first good.

Common passions are excited by common qualities.—Men look for beauty and the simper of good-humoured docility: women are captivated by easy manners; a gentleman-like man seldom fails to please them, and their thirsty ears eagerly drink the insinuating nothings of politeness, whilst they turn from the unintelligible sounds of the charmer—reason, charm he never so wisely. With respect to superficial accomplishments, the rake certainly has the advantage; and of these females can form an opinion, for it is their own ground. Rendered gay and giddy by the whole tenor of their lives, the very aspect of wisdom, or the severe graces of virtue, must have a lugubrious appearance to them; and produce a kind of restraint from which they and love, sportive child, naturally revolt. Without taste, excepting of the lighter kind, for taste is the offspring of judgment, how can they discover that true beauty and grace must arise from the play of the mind? and how can they be expected to relish in a lover what they do not, or very imperfectly, possess themselves? The sympathy that unites hearts, and invites to confidence, in them is so very faint, that it cannot take fire, and thus mount to passion. No, I repeat it, the love cherished by such minds, must have grosser fewel!

The inference is obvious; till women are led to exercise their understandings, they should not be satirized for their attachment to rakes; or even

for being rakes at heart, when it appears to be the inevitable consequence of their education. They who live to please—must find their enjoyments, their happiness, in pleasure! It is a trite, yet true remark, that we never do any thing well, unless we love it for its own sake.

Supposing, however, for a moment, that women were, in some future revolution of time, to become, what I sincerely wish them to be, even love would acquire more serious dignity, and be purified in its own fires; and virtue giving true delicacy to their affections, they would turn with disgust from a rake. Reasoning then, as well as feeling, the only province of woman, at present, they might easily guard against exterior graces, and quickly learn to despise the sensibility that had been excited and hackneyed in the ways of women, whose trade was vice; and allurements; wanton airs. They would recollect that the flame, one must use appropriated expressions, which they wished to light up, had been exhausted by lust, and that the sated appetite, losing all relish for pure and simple pleasures, could only be roused by licentious arts or variety. What satisfaction could a woman of delicacy promise herself in a union with such a man, when the very artlessness of her affection might appear insipid? Thus does Dryden describe the situation,

———Where love is duty, on the female side,
On theirs mere sensual gust, and sought with surly pride.

But one grand truth women have yet to learn, though much it imports them to act accordingly. In the choice of a husband, they should not be led astray by the qualities of a lover—for a lover the husband, even supposing him to be wise and virtuous, cannot long remain.

Were women more rationally educated, could they take a more comprehensive view of things, they would be contented to love but once in their lives; and after marriage calmly let passion subside into friendship—into that tender intimacy, which is the best refuge from care; yet is built on such pure, still affections, that idle jealousies would not be allowed to disturb the discharge of the sober duties of life, or to engross the thoughts that ought to be otherwise employed. This is a state in which many men live; but few, very few women. And the difference may easily be accounted for, without recurring to a sexual character. Men, for whom we are told women were made, have too much occupied the thoughts of women; and this association has so entangled love with all their motives of action; and, to harp a little on an old string, having been solely employed either to prepare themselves to excite love, or actually putting their lessons in practice, they cannot live

without love. But, when a sense of duty, or fear of shame, obliges them to restrain this pampered desire of pleasing beyond certain lengths, too far for delicacy, it is true, though far from criminality, they obstinately determine to love, I speak of the passion, their husbands to the end of the chapter—and then acting the part which they foolishly exacted from their lovers, they become abject woers, and fond slaves.

Men of wit and fancy are often rakes; and fancy is the food of love. Such men will inspire passion. Half the sex, in its present infantine state, would pine for a Lovelace; a man so witty, so graceful, and so valiant: and can they *deserve* blame for acting according to principles so constantly inculcated? They want a lover, and protector; and behold him kneeling before them—bravery prostrate to beauty! The virtues of a husband are thus thrown by love into the back ground, and gay hopes, or lively emotions, banish reflection till the day of reckoning come; and come it surely will, to turn the sprightly lover into a surly suspicious tyrant, who contemptuously insults the very weakness he fostered. Or, supposing the rake reformed, he cannot quickly get rid of old habits. When a man of abilities is first carried away by his passions, it is necessary that sentiment and taste varnish the enormities of vice, and give a zest to brutal indulgences; but when the gloss of novelty is worn off, and pleasure palls upon the sense, lasciviousness becomes barefaced, and enjoyment only the desperate effort of weakness flying from reflection as from a legion of devils. Oh! virtue, thou art not an empty name! All that life can give—thou givest!

If much comfort cannot be expected from the friendship of a reformed rake of superiour abilities, what is the consequence when he lacketh sense, as well as principles? Verily misery, in its most hideous shape. When the habits of weak people are consolidated by time, a reformation is barely possible; and actually makes the beings miserable who have not sufficient mind to be amused by innocent pleasure; like the tradesman who retires from the hurry of business, nature presents to them only a universal blank; and the restless thoughts prey on the damped spirits.* Their reformation, as well as his retirement, actually makes them wretched because it deprives them of all employment, by quenching the hopes and fears that set in motion their sluggish minds.

*I have frequently seen this exemplified in women whose beauty could no longer be repaired. They have retired from the noisy scenes of dissipation; but, unless they became methodists, the solitude of the select society of their family connections or acquaintance, has presented only a fearful void; consequently, nervous complaints, and all the vapourish train of idleness, rendered them quite as useless, and far more unhappy, than when they joined the giddy throng.

If such be the force of habit; if such be the bondage of folly, how carefully ought we to guard the mind from storing up vicious associations; and equally careful should we be to cultivate the understanding, to save the poor wight from the weak dependent state of even harmless ignorance. For it is the right use of reason alone which makes us independent of every thing—excepting the unclouded Reason—“Whole service is perfect freedom.”

CHAP. VII.

MODESTY.—COMPREHENSIVELY CONSIDERED, AND NOT AS A SEXUAL VIRTUE.

Modesty! Sacred offspring of sensibility and reason!—true delicacy of mind!—may I unblamed presume to investigate thy nature, and trace to its covert the mild charm, that mellowing each harsh feature of a character, renders what would otherwise only inspire cold admiration—lovely!—Thou that smoothest the wrinkles of wisdom, and softenest the tone of the sublimest virtues till they all melt into humanity;—thou that spreadest the ethereal cloud that, surrounding love, heightens every beauty, it half shades, breathing those coy sweets that steal into the heart, and charm the senses—modulate for me the language of persuasive reason, till I rouse my sex from the flowery bed, on which they supinely sleep life away!

In speaking of the association of our ideas, I have noticed two distinct modes; and in defining modesty, it appears to me equally proper to discriminate that purity of mind, which is the effect of chastity, from a simplicity of character that leads us to form a just opinion of ourselves, equally distant from vanity or presumption, though by no means incompatible with a lofty consciousness of our own dignity. Modesty, in the latter signification of the term, is, that soberness of mind which teaches a man not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think, and should be distinguished from humility, because humility is a kind of self-abasement.

A modest man often conceives a great plan, and tenaciously adheres to it, conscious of his own strength, till success gives it a sanction that determines its character. Milton was not arrogant when he suffered a suggestion of judgment to escape him that proved a prophecy; nor was General Washington when he accepted of the command of the American forces. The latter has always been characterized as a modest man; but had he been merely humble, he would probably have shrunk back irresolute, afraid of trusting to himself the direction of an enterprise, on which so much depended.

A modest man is steady, an humble man timid, and a vain one presumptuous:—this is the judgment, which the observation of many characters, has led me to form. Jesus Christ was modest, Moses was humble, and Peter vain.

Thus, discriminating modesty from humility in one case, I do not mean to confound it with bashfulness in the other. Bashfulness, in fact, is so distinct from modesty, that the most bashful lass, or raw country lout, often become the most impudent; for their bashfulness being merely the instinctive timidity of ignorance, custom soon changes it into assurance.*

The shameless behaviour of the prostitutes, who infest the streets of this metropolis, raising alternate emotions of pity and disgust, may serve to illustrate this remark. They trample on virgin bashfulness with a sort of bravado, and glorying in their shame, become more audaciously lewd than men, however depraved, to whom this sexual quality has not been gratuitously granted, ever appear to be. But these poor ignorant wretches never had any modesty to lose, when they consigned themselves to infamy; for modesty is a virtue, not a quality. No, they were only bashful, shame-faced innocents; and losing their innocence, their shame-facedness was rudely brushed off; a virtue would have left some vestiges in the mind, had it been sacrificed to passion, to make us respect the grand ruin.

*Such is the country-maiden's fright,
 When first a red-coat is in sight;
 Behind the door she hides her face;
 Next time at distance eyes the lace:
 She now can all his terrors stand,
 Nor from his squeeze withdraws her hand.
 She plays familiar in his arms,
 And ev'ry soldier hath his charms;
 From tent to tent she spreads her flame;
 For custom conquers fear and shame.

Gay.

Purity of mind, or that genuine delicacy, which is the only virtuous support of chastity, is near akin to that refinement of humanity, which never resides in any but cultivated minds. It is something nobler than innocence, it is the delicacy of reflection, and not the coyness of ignorance. The reserve of reason, which, like habitual cleanliness, is seldom seen in any great degree, unless the soul is active, may easily be distinguished from rustic shyness or wanton skittishness; and, so far from being incompatible with knowledge, it is its fairest fruit. What a gross idea of modesty had the writer of the following remark! “The lady who asked the question whether women may be instructed in the modern system of botany, consistently with female delicacy?—was accused of ridiculous prudery: nevertheless, if she had proposed the question to me, I should certainly have answered—They cannot.” Thus is the fair book of knowledge to be shut with an everlasting seal! On reading similar passages I have reverentially lifted up my eyes and heart to Him who liveth for ever and ever, and said, O my Father, hast Thou by the very constitution of her nature forbid Thy child to seek Thee in the fair forms of truth? And, can her soul be sullied by the knowledge that awfully calls her to Thee?

I have then philosophically pursued these reflections till I inferred that those women who have most improved their reason must have the most modesty—though a dignified sedateness of deportment may have succeeded the playful, bewitching bashfulness of youth.*

And thus have I argued. To render chastity the virtue from which unsophisticated modesty will naturally flow, the attention should be called away from employments which only exercise the sensibility; and the heart made to beat time to humanity, rather than to throb with love. The woman who has dedicated a considerable portion of her time to pursuits purely intellectual, and whose affections have been exercised by humane plans of usefulness, must have more purity of mind, as a natural consequence, than the ignorant beings whose time and thoughts have been occupied by gay pleasures or schemes to conquer hearts.† The regulation of the behaviour

*Modesty, is the graceful calm virtue of maturity; bashfulness, the charm of vivacious youth.

†I have conversed, as man with man, with medical men, on anatomical subjects; and compared the proportions of the human body with artists—yet such modesty did I meet with, that I was never reminded by word or look of my sex, of the absurd rules which make modesty a pharisaical cloak of weakness. And I am persuaded that in the pursuit of knowledge women would never be insulted by sensible men, and rarely by men of any description, if they did not by mock modesty remind them that they were women: actuated by the same spirit as the Portugeze ladies, who

is not modesty, though those who study rules of decorum are, in general, termed modest women. Make the heart clean, let it expand and feel for all that is human, instead of being narrowed by selfish passions; and let the mind frequently contemplate subjects that exercise the understanding, without heating the imagination, and artless modesty will give the finishing touches to the picture.

She who can discern the dawn of immortality, in the streaks that shoot athwart the misty night of ignorance, promising a clearer day, will respect, as a sacred temple, the body that enshrines such an improvable soul. True love, likewise, spreads this kind of mysterious sanctity round the beloved object, making the lover most modest when in her presence.* So reserved is affection that, receiving or returning personal endearments, it wishes, not only to shun the human eye, as a kind of profanation; but to diffuse an encircling cloudy obscurity to shut out even the saucy sparkling sunbeams. Yet, that affection does not deserve the epithet of chaste, which does not receive a sublime gloom of tender melancholy, that allows the mind for a moment to stand still and enjoy the present satisfaction, when a consciousness of the Divine presence is felt—for this must ever be the food of joy!

As I have always been fond of tracing to its source in nature any prevailing custom, I have frequently thought that it was a sentiment of affection for whatever had touched the person of an absent or lost friend, which gave birth to that respect for relics, so much abused by selfish priests. Devotion, or love, may be allowed to hallow the garments as well as the person; for the lover must want fancy who has not a sort of sacred respect for the glove or slipper of his mistress. He could not confound them with vulgar things of the same kind. This fine sentiment, perhaps, would not bear to be analyzed by the experimental philosopher—but of such stuff is human rapture made up!—A shadowy phantom glides before us, obscuring every other object; yet when the soft cloud is grasped, the form melts into common air, leaving a solitary void, or sweet perfume, stolen from the violet, that memory long holds dear. But, I have tripped unawares on fairy ground, feeling the balmy gale of spring stealing on me, though november frowns.

As a sex, women are more chaste than men, and as modesty is the effect of chastity, they may deserve to have this virtue ascribed to them in rather

would think their charms insulted, if, when left alone with a man, he did not, at least, attempt to be grossly familiar with their persons. Men are not always men in the company of women, nor would women always remember that they are women, if they were allowed to acquire more understanding.

*Male or female; for the world contains many modest men.

an appropriated sense; yet, I must be allowed to add an hesitating if:—for I doubt whether chastity will produce modesty, though it may propriety of conduct, when it is merely a respect for the opinion of the world,* and when coquetry and the love-lorn tales of novelists employ the thoughts. Nay, from experience, and reason, I should be led to expect to meet with more modesty amongst men than women, simply because men exercise their understandings more than women.

But, with respect to propriety of behaviour, excepting one class of females, women have evidently the advantage. What can be more disgusting than that impudent dross of gallantry, thought so manly, which makes many men stare insultingly at every female they meet? Can it be termed respect for the sex? No, this loose behaviour shews such habitual depravity, such weakness of mind, that it is vain to expect much public or private virtue, till both men and women grow more modest—till men, curbing a sensual fondness for the sex, or an affectation of manly assurance, more properly speaking, impudence, treat each other with respect—unless appetite or passion give the tone, peculiar to it, to their behaviour. I mean even personal respect—the modest respect of humanity, and fellow-feeling—not the libidinous mockery of gallantry, nor the insolent condescension of protectorship.

To carry the observation still further, modesty must heartily disclaim, and refuse to dwell with that debauchery of mind, which leads a man coolly to bring forward, without a blush, indecent allusions, or obscene witticisms, in the presence of a fellow creature; women are now out of the question, for then it is brutality. Respect for man, as man, is the foundation of every noble sentiment. How much more modest is the libertine who obeys the call of appetite or fancy, than the lewd joker who sets the table in a roar!

This is one of the many instances in which the sexual distinction respecting modesty has proved fatal to virtue and happiness. It is, however, carried still further, and woman, weak woman! made by her education the slave of sensibility, is required, on the most trying occasions, to resist that sensibility. “Can any thing,” says Knox, “be more absurd than keeping women in a state of ignorance, and yet so vehemently to insist on their resisting temptation?”—Thus when virtue or honour make it proper to check a passion, the burden is thrown on the weaker shoulders, contrary to reason and true modesty, which, at least, should render the self-denial

*The immodest behaviour of many married women, who are nevertheless faithful to their husbands’ beds, will illustrate this remark.

mutual, to say nothing of the generosity of bravery, supposed to be a manly virtue.

In the same strain runs Rousseau's and Dr. Gregory's advice respecting modesty, strangely miscalled! for they both desire a wife to leave it in doubt whether sensibility or weakness led her to her husband's arms.—The woman is immodest who can let the shadow of such a doubt remain in her husband's mind a moment.

But to state the subject in a different light.—The want of modesty, which I principally deplore as subversive of morality, arises from the state of warfare so strenuously supported by voluptuous men as the very essence of modesty, though, in fact, its bane; because it is a refinement on lust, that men fall into who have not sufficient virtue to relish the innocent pleasures of love. A man of delicacy carries his notions of modesty still further, for neither weakness nor sensibility will gratify him—he looks for affection.

Again; men boast of their triumphs over women, what do they boast of? Truly the creature of sensibility was surprised by her sensibility into folly—into vice;* and the dreadful reckoning falls heavily on her own weak head, when reason wakes. For where art thou to find comfort, forlorn and disconsolate one? He who ought to have directed thy reason, and supported thy weakness, has betrayed thee! In a dream of passion thou consented to wander through flowery lawns, and heedlessly stepping over the precipice to which thy guide, instead of guarding, lured thee, thou startest from thy dream only to face a sneering, frowning world, and to find thyself alone in a waste, for he that triumphed in thy weakness is now pursuing new conquests; but for thee—there is no redemption on this side the grave!—And what resource hast thou in an enervated mind to raise a sinking heart?

But, if the sexes be really to live in a state of warfare, if nature have pointed it out, let them act nobly, or let pride whisper to them, that the victory is mean when they merely vanquish sensibility. The real conquest is that over affection not taken by surprise—when, like Heloisa, a woman gives up all the world, deliberately, for love. I do not now consider the wisdom or virtue of such a sacrifice, I only contend that it was a sacrifice to affection, and not merely to sensibility, though she had her share.—And I must be allowed to call her a modest woman, before I dismiss this part of the subject, by saying, that till men are more chaste women will be immodest. Where, indeed, could modest women find husbands from whom

*The poor moth fluttering round a candle, burns its wings.

they would not continually turn with disgust? Modesty must be equally cultivated by both sexes, or it will ever remain a sickly hot-house plant, whilst the affectation of it, the fig leaf borrowed by wantonness, may give a zest to voluptuous enjoyments.

Men will probably still insist that woman ought to have more modesty than man; but it is not dispassionate reasoners who will most earnestly oppose my opinion. No, they are the men of fancy, the favourites of the sex, who outwardly respect and inwardly despise the weak creatures whom they thus sport with. They cannot submit to resign the highest sensual gratification, nor even to relish the epicurism of virtue—self-denial.

To take another view of the subject, confining my remarks to women.

The ridiculous falsities* which are told to children, from mistaken notions of modesty, tend very early to inflame their imaginations and set their little minds to work, respecting subjects, which nature never intended they should think of till the body arrived at some degree of maturity; then the passions naturally begin to take place of the senses, as instruments to unfold the understanding, and form the moral character.

In nurseries, and boarding-schools, I fear, girls are first spoiled; particularly in the latter. A number of girls sleep in the same room, and wash together. And, though I should be sorry to contaminate an innocent creature's mind by instilling false delicacy, or those indecent prudish notions, which early cautions respecting the other sex naturally engender, I should be very anxious to prevent their acquiring nasty, or immodest habits; and as many girls have learned very nasty tricks, from ignorant servants, the mixing them thus indiscriminately together, is very improper.

To say the truth women are, in general, too familiar with each other, which leads to that gross degree of familiarity that so frequently renders the marriage state unhappy. Why in the name of decency are sisters, female intimates, or ladies and their waiting-women, to be so grossly familiar as

*Children very early see cats with their kittens, birds with their young ones, &c. Why then are they not to be told that their mothers carry and nourish them in the same way? As there would then be no appearance of mystery they would never think of the subject more. Truth may always be told to children, if it be told gravely; but it is the immodesty of affected modesty, that does all the mischief; and this smoke heats the imagination by vainly endeavouring to obscure certain objects. If, indeed, children could be kept entirely from improper company, we should never allude to any such subjects; but as this is impossible, it is best to tell them the truth, especially as such information, not interesting them, will make no impression on their imagination.

to forget the respect which one human creature owes to another? That squeamish delicacy which shrinks from the most disgusting offices when affection* or humanity lead us to watch at a sick pillow, is despicable. But, why women in health should be more familiar with each other than men are, when they boast of their superior delicacy, is a solecism in manners which I could never solve.

In order to preserve health and beauty, I should earnestly recommend frequent ablutions, to dignify my advice that it may not offend the fastidious ear; and, by example, girls ought to be taught to wash and dress alone, without any distinction of rank; and if custom should make them require some little assistance, let them not require it till that part of the business is over which ought never to be done before a fellow-creature; because it is an insult to the majesty of human nature. Not on the score of modesty, but decency; for the care which some modest women take, making at the same time a display of that care, not to let their legs be seen, is as childish as immodest.†

I could proceed still further, till I animadverted on some still more nasty customs, which men never fall into. Secrets are told—where silence ought to reign; and that regard to cleanliness, which some religious sects have, perhaps, carried too far, especially the Essenes, amongst the Jews, by making that an insult to God which is only an insult to humanity, is violated in a beastly manner. How can *delicate* women obtrude on notice that part of the animal oeconomy, which is so very disgusting? And is it not very rational to conclude, that the women who have not been taught to respect the human nature of their own sex, in these particulars, will not long respect the mere difference of sex in their husbands? After their maidenish bashfulness is once lost, I, in fact, have generally observed, that women fall into old habits; and treat their husbands as they did their sisters or female acquaintance.

Besides, women from necessity, because their minds are not cultivated, have recourse very often to what I familiarly term bodily wit; and their intimacies are of the same kind. In short, with respect to both mind and body, they are too intimate. That decent personal reserve which is the foundation

*Affection would rather make one choose to perform these offices, to spare the delicacy of a friend, by still keeping a veil over them, for the personal helplessness, produced by sickness, is of an humbling nature.

†I remember to have met with a sentence, in a book of education, that made me smile. "It would be needless to caution you against putting your hand, by chance, under your neck-handkerchief; for a modest woman never did so!"

of dignity of character, must be kept up between woman and woman, or their minds will never gain strength or modesty.

On this account also, I object to many females being shut up together in nurseries, schools, or convents. I cannot recollect without indignation, the jokes and hoiden tricks, which knots of young women indulge themselves in, when in my youth accident threw me, an awkward rustic, in their way. They were almost on a par with the double meanings, which shake the convivial table when the glass has circulated freely. But, it is vain to attempt to keep the heart pure, unless the head is furnished with ideas, and set to work to compare them, in order to acquire judgment, by generalizing simple ones; and modesty, by making the understanding damp the sensibility.

It may be thought that I lay too great a stress on personal reserve; but it is ever the handmaid of modesty. So that were I to name the graces that ought to adorn beauty, I should instantly exclaim, cleanliness, neatness, and personal reserve. It is obvious, I suppose, that the reserve I mean, has nothing sexual in it, and that I think it *equally* necessary in both sexes. So necessary, indeed, is that reserve and cleanliness which indolent women too often neglect, that I will venture to affirm that when two or three women live in the same house, the one will be most respected by the male part of the family, who reside with them, leaving love entirely out of the question, who pays this kind of habitual respect to her person.

When domestic friends meet in a morning, there will naturally prevail an affectionate seriousness, especially, if each look forward to the discharge of daily duties; and it may be reckoned fanciful, but this sentiment has frequently risen spontaneously in my mind, I have been pleased after breathing the sweet-bracing morning air, to see the same kind of freshness in the countenances I particularly loved; I was glad to see them braced, as it were, for the day, and ready to run their course with the sun. The greetings of affection in the morning are by these means more respectful than the familiar tenderness which frequently prolongs the evening talk. Nay, I have often felt hurt, not to say disgusted, when a friend has appeared, whom I parted with full dressed the evening before, with her clothes huddled on, because she chose to indulge herself in bed till the last moment.

Domestic affection can only be kept alive by these neglected attentions; yet if men and women took half as much pains to dress habitually neat, as they do to ornament, or rather to disfigure, their persons, much would be done towards the attainment of purity of mind. But women only dress to gratify men of gallantry; for the lover is always best pleased with the simple garb that fits close to the shape. There is an impertinence in

ornaments that rebuffs affection; because love always clings round the idea of home.

As a sex, women are habitually indolent; and every thing tends to make them so. I do not forget the spurts of activity which sensibility produces; but as these flights of feelings only increase the evil, they are not to be confounded with the slow, orderly walk of reason. So great in reality is their mental and bodily indolence, that till their body be strengthened and their understanding enlarged by active exertions, there is little reason to expect that modesty will take place of bashfulness. They may find it prudent to assume its semblance; but the fair veil will only be worn on gala days.

Perhaps, there is not a virtue that mixes so kindly with every other as modesty.—It is the pale moon-beam that renders more interesting every virtue it softens, giving mild grandeur to the contracted horizon. Nothing can be more beautiful than the poetical fiction, which makes Diana with her silver crescent, the goddess of chastity. I have sometimes thought, that wandering with sedate step in some lonely recess, a modest dame of antiquity must have felt a glow of conscious dignity when, after contemplating the soft shadowy landscape, she has invited with placid fervour the mild reflection of her sister's beams to turn to her chaste bosom.

A Christian has still nobler motives to incite her to preserve her chastity and acquire modesty, for her body has been called the Temple of the living God; of that God who requires more than modesty of mien. His eye searcheth the heart; and let her remember, that if she hope to find favour in the sight of purity itself, her chastity must be founded on modesty, and not on worldly prudence; or verily a good reputation will be her only reward; for that awful intercourse, that sacred communication, which virtue establishes between man and his Maker, must give rise to the wish of being pure as he is pure!

After the foregoing remarks, it is almost superfluous to add, that I consider all those feminine airs of maturity, which succeed bashfulness, to which truth is sacrificed, to secure the heart of a husband, or rather to force him to be still a lover when nature would, had she not been interrupted in her operations, have made love give place to friendship, as immodest. The tenderness which a man will feel for the mother of his children is an excellent substitute for the ardour of unsatisfied passion; but to prolong that ardour it is indelicate, not to say immodest, for women to feign an unnatural coldness of constitution. Women as well as men ought to have the common appetites and passions of their nature, they are only brutal when unchecked by reason: but the obligation to check them is the duty of mankind, not a sexual duty. Nature, in these respects, may safely be left to herself; let

women only acquire knowledge and humanity, and love will teach them modesty.* There is no need of falsehoods, disgusting as futile, for studied rules of behaviour only impose on shallow observers; a man of sense soon sees through, and despises the affectation.

The behaviour of young people, to each other, as men and women, is the last thing that should be thought of in education. In fact, behaviour in most circumstances is now so much thought of, that simplicity of character is rarely to be seen: yet, if men were only anxious to cultivate each virtue, and let it take root firmly in the mind, the grace resulting from it, its natural exterior mark, would soon strip affectation of its flaunting plumes; because, fallacious as unstable, is the conduct that is not founded upon truth!

Would ye, O my sisters, really possess modesty, ye must remember that the possession of virtue, of any denomination, is incompatible with ignorance and vanity! ye must acquire that soberness of mind, which the exercise of duties, and the pursuit of knowledge, alone inspire, or ye will still remain in a doubtful dependent situation, and only be loved whilst ye are fair! The downcast eye, the rosy blush, the retiring grace, are all proper in their season; but modesty, being the child of reason, cannot long exist with the sensibility that is not tempered by reflection. Besides, when love, even innocent love, is the whole employ of your lives, your hearts will be too soft to afford modesty that tranquil retreat, where she delights to dwell, in close union with humanity.

*The behaviour of many newly married women has often disgusted me. They seem anxious never to let their husbands forget the privilege of marriage; and to find no pleasure in his society unless he is acting the lover. Short, indeed, must be the reign of love, when the flame is thus constantly blown up, without its receiving solid fuel!

CHAP. VIII.

MORALITY UNDERMINED BY SEXUAL
NOTIONS OF THE IMPORTANCE
OF A GOOD REPUTATION.

It has long since occurred to me that advice respecting behaviour, and all the various modes of preserving a good reputation, which have been so strenuously inculcated on the female world, were specious poisons, that incrusting morality eat away the substance. And, that this measuring of shadows produced a false calculation, because their length depends so much on the height of the sun, and other adventitious circumstances.

Whence arises the easy fallacious behaviour of a courtier? From his situation, undoubtedly: for standing in need of dependents, he is obliged to learn the art of denying without giving offence, and, of evasively feeding hope with the chameleon's food: thus does politeness sport with truth, and eating away the sincerity and humanity natural to man, produce the fine gentleman.

Women likewise acquire, from a supposed necessity, an equally artificial mode of behaviour. Yet truth is not with impunity to be sported with, for the practised dissembler, at last, become the dupe of his own arts, loses that sagacity, which has been justly termed common sense; namely, a quick perception of common truths: which are constantly received as such by the unsophisticated mind, though it might not have had sufficient energy to discover them itself, when obscured by local prejudices. The greater number of people take their opinions on trust to avoid the trouble of exercising their

own minds, and these indolent beings naturally adhere to the letter, rather than the spirit of a law, divine or human. "Women," says some author, I cannot recollect who, "mind not what only heaven sees." Why, indeed, should they? it is the eye of man that they have been taught to dread—and if they can lull their Argus to sleep, they seldom think of heaven or themselves, because their reputation is safe; and it is reputation, not chastity and all its fair train, that they are employed to keep free from spot, not as a virtue, but to preserve their station in the world.

To prove the truth of this remark, I need only advert to the intrigues of married women, particularly in high life, and in countries where women are suitably married, according to their respective ranks, by their parents. If an innocent girl become a prey to love, she is degraded for ever, though her mind was not polluted by the arts which married women, under the convenient cloke of marriage, practise; nor has she violated any duty—but the duty of respecting herself. The married woman, on the contrary, breaks a most sacred engagement, and becomes a cruel mother when she is a false and faithless wife. If her husband have still an affection for her, the arts which she must practise to deceive him, will render her the most contemptible of human beings; and, at any rate, the contrivances necessary to preserve appearances, will keep her mind in that childish, or vicious, tumult, which destroys all its energy. Besides, in time, like those people who habitually take cordials to raise their spirits, she will want an intrigue to give life to her thoughts, having lost all relish for pleasures that are not highly seasoned by hope or fear.

Sometimes married women act still more audaciously; I will mention an instance.

A woman of quality, notorious for her gallantries, though as she still lived with her husband, nobody chose to place her in the class where she ought to have been placed, made a point of treating with the most insulting contempt a poor timid creature, abashed by a sense of her former weakness, whom a neighbouring gentleman had seduced and afterwards married. This woman had actually confounded virtue with reputation; and, I do believe, valued herself on the propriety of her behaviour before marriage, though when once settled to the satisfaction of her family, she and her lord were equally faithless,—so that the half alive heir to an immense estate came from heaven knows where!

To view this subject in another light.

I have known a number of women who, if they did not love their husbands, loved nobody else, give themselves entirely up to vanity and dissipation, neglecting every domestic duty; nay, even squandering away all the

money which should have been saved for their helpless younger children, yet have plumed themselves on their unsullied reputation, as if the whole compass of their duty as wives and mothers was only to preserve it. Whilst other indolent women, neglecting every personal duty, have thought that they deserved their husbands' affection, because, forsooth, they acted in this respect with propriety.

Weak minds are always fond of resting in the ceremonials of duty, but morality offers much simpler motives; and it were to be wished that superficial moralists had said less respecting behaviour, and outward observances, for unless virtue, of any kind, be built on knowledge, it will only produce a kind of insipid decency. Respect for the opinion of the world, has, however, been termed the principal duty of woman in the most express words, for Rousseau declares, "that reputation is no less indispensable than chastity." "A man," adds he, "secure in his own good conduct, depends only on himself, and may brave the public opinion: but a woman, in behaving well, performs but half her duty; as what is thought of her, is as important to her as what she really is. It follows hence, that the system of a woman's education should, in this respect, be directly contrary to that of ours. Opinion is the grave of virtue among the men; but its throne among women." It is strictly logical to infer that the virtue that rests on opinion is merely worldly, and that it is the virtue of a being to whom reason has been denied. But, even with respect to the opinion of the world, I am convinced that this class of reasoners are mistaken.

This regard for reputation, independent of its being one of the natural rewards of virtue, however, took its rise from a cause that I have already deplored as the grand source of female depravity, the impossibility of regaining respectability by a return to virtue, though men preserve theirs during the indulgence of vice. It was natural for women then to endeavour to preserve what once lost—was lost for ever, till this care swallowing up every other care, reputation for chastity, became the one thing needful to the sex. But vain is the scrupulosity of ignorance, for neither religion nor virtue, when they reside in the heart, require such a puerile attention to mere ceremonies, because the behaviour must, upon the whole, be proper, when the motive is pure.

To support my opinion I can produce very respectable authority; and the authority of a cool reasoner ought to have weight to enforce consideration, though not to establish a sentiment. Speaking of the general laws of morality, Dr. Smith observes,—“That by some very extraordinary and unlucky circumstance, a good man may come to be suspected of a crime of which he was altogether incapable, and upon that account be most unjustly exposed

for the remaining part of his life to the horror and aversion of mankind. By an accident of this kind he may be said to lose his all, notwithstanding his integrity and justice, in the same manner as a cautious man, notwithstanding his utmost circumspection, may be ruined by an earthquake or an inundation. Accidents of the first kind, however, are perhaps still more rare, and still more contrary to the common course of things than those of the second; and it still remains true, that the practice of truth, justice, and humanity, is a certain and almost infallible method of acquiring what those virtues chiefly aim at, the confidence and love of those we live with. A person may be easily misrepresented with regard to a particular action; but it is scarce possible that he should be so with regard to the general tenor of his conduct. An innocent man may be believed to have done wrong: this, however, will rarely happen. On the contrary, the established opinion of the innocence of his manners will often lead us to absolve him where he has really been in the fault, notwithstanding very strong presumptions.”

I perfectly coincide in opinion with this writer, for I verily believe that few of either sex were ever despised for certain vices without deserving to be despised. I speak not of the calumny of the moment, which hovers over a character, like one of the dense morning fogs of November, over this metropolis, till it gradually subsides before the common light of day, I only contend that the daily conduct of the majority prevails to stamp their character with the impression of truth. Quietly does the clear light, shining day after day, refute the ignorant surmise, or malicious tale, which has thrown dirt on a pure character. A false light distorted, for a short time, its shadow—reputation; but it seldom fails to become just when the cloud is dispersed that produced the mistake in vision.

Many people, undoubtedly, in several respects obtain a better reputation than, strictly speaking, they deserve; for unremitting industry will mostly reach its goal in all races. They who only strive for this paltry prize, like the Pharisees, who prayed at the corners of streets, to be seen of men, verily obtain the reward they seek; for the heart of man cannot be read by man! Still the fair fame that is naturally reflected by good actions, when the man is only employed to direct his steps aright, regardless of the lookers-on, is, in general, not only more true, but more sure.

There are, it is true, trials when the good man must appeal to God from the injustice of man; and amidst the whining candour or hissings of envy, erect a pavilion in his own mind to retire to till the rumour be overpast; nay, the darts of undeserved censure may pierce an innocent tender bosom through with many sorrows; but these are all exceptions to general rules. And it is according to common laws that human behaviour ought to be

regulated. The eccentric orbit of the comet never influences astronomical calculations respecting the invariable order established in the motion of the principal bodies of the solar system.

I will then venture to affirm, that after a man is arrived at maturity, the general outline of his character in the world is just, allowing for the before-mentioned exceptions to the rule. I do not say that a prudent, worldly-wise man, with only negative virtues and qualities, may not sometimes obtain a smoother reputation than a wiser or a better man. So far from it, that I am apt to conclude from experience, that where the virtue of two people is nearly equal, the most negative character will be liked best by the world at large, whilst the other may have more friends in private life. But the hills and dales, clouds and sunshine, conspicuous in the virtues of great men, set off each other; and though they afford envious weakness a fairer mark to shoot at, the real character will still work its way to light, though bespattered by weak affection, or ingenious malice.*

With respect to that anxiety to preserve a reputation hardly earned, which leads sagacious people to analyze it, I shall not make the obvious comment; but I am afraid that morality is very insidiously undermined, in the female world, by the attention being turned to the shew instead of the substance. A simple thing is thus made strangely complicated; nay, sometimes virtue and its shadow are set at variance. We should never, perhaps, have heard of Lucretia, had she died to preserve her chastity instead of her reputation. If we really deserve our own good opinion we shall commonly be respected in the world; but if we pant after higher improvement and higher attainments, it is not sufficient to view ourselves as we suppose that we are viewed by others, though this has been ingeniously argued, as the foundation of our moral sentiments.† Because each by-stander may have his own prejudices, beside the prejudices of his age or country. We should rather endeavour to view ourselves as we suppose that Being views us who seeth each thought ripen into action, and whose judgment never swerves from the eternal rule of right. Righteous are all his judgments—just as merciful!

The humble mind that seeketh to find favour in His sight, and calmly examines its conduct when only His presence is felt, will seldom form a very erroneous opinion of its own virtues. During the still hour of self-collection the angry brow of offended justice will be fearfully deprecrated, or the tie

*I allude to various biographical writings, but particularly to Boswell's *Life of Johnson*.

†Smith.

which draws man to the Deity will be recognized in the pure sentiment of reverential adoration, that swells the heart without exciting any tumultuous emotions. In these solemn moments man discovers the germ of those vices, which like the Java tree shed a pestiferous vapour around—death is in the shade! and he perceives them without abhorrence, because he feels himself drawn by some cord of love to all his fellow-creatures, for whose follies he is anxious to find every extenuation in their nature—in himself. If I, he may thus argue, who exercise my own mind, and have been refined by tribulation, find the serpent's egg in some fold of my heart, and crush it with difficulty, shall not I pity those who have stamped with less vigour, or who have heedlessly nurtured the insidious reptile till it poisoned the vital stream it sucked? Can I, conscious of my secret sins, throw off my fellow-creatures, and calmly see them drop into the chasm of perdition, that yawns to receive them.—No! no! The agonized heart will cry with suffocating impatience—I too am a man! and have vices, hid, perhaps, from human eye, that bend me to the dust before God, and loudly tell me, when all is mute, that we are formed of the same earth, and breathe the same element. Humanity thus rises naturally out of humility, and twists the cords of love that in various convolutions entangle the heart.

This sympathy extends still further, till a man well pleased observes force in arguments that do not carry conviction to his own bosom, and he gladly places in the fairest light, to himself, the shews of reason that have led others astray, rejoiced to find some reason in all the errors of man; though before convinced that he who rules the day makes his sun to shine on all. Yet, shaking hands thus as it were with corruption, one foot on earth, the other with bold stride mounts to heaven, and claims kindred with superiour natures. Virtues, unobserved by man, drop their balmy fragrance at this cool hour, and the thirsty land, refreshed by the pure streams of comfort that suddenly gush out, is crowned with smiling verdure; this is the living green on which that eye may look with complacency that is too pure to behold iniquity!

But my spirits flag; and I must silently indulge the reverie these reflections lead to, unable to describe the sentiments, that have calmed my soul, when watching the rising sun, a soft shower drizzling through the leaves of neighbouring trees, seemed to fall on my languid, yet tranquil spirits, to cool the heart that had been heated by the passions which reason laboured to tame.

The leading principles which run through all my disquisitions, would render it unnecessary to enlarge on this subject, if a constant attention to keep the varnish of the character fresh, and in good condition, were not

often inculcated as the sum total of female duty; if rules to regulate the behaviour, and to preserve the reputation, did not too frequently supersede moral obligations. But, with respect to reputation, the attention is confined to a single virtue—chastity. If the honour of a woman, as it is absurdly called, be safe, she may neglect every social duty; nay, ruin her family by gaming and extravagance; yet still present a shameless front—for truly she is an honourable woman!

Mrs. Macaulay has justly observed, that “there is but one fault which a woman of honour may not commit with impunity.” She then justly and humanely adds—“This has given rise to the trite and foolish observation, that the first fault against chastity in woman has a radical power to deprave the character. But no such frail beings come out of the hands of nature. The human mind is built of nobler materials than to be easily corrupted; and with all their disadvantages, of situation and education, women seldom become entirely abandoned till they are thrown into a state of desperation, by the venomous rancour of their own sex.”

But, in proportion as this regard for the reputation of chastity is prized by women, it is despised by men: and the two extremes are equally destructive to morality.

Men are certainly more under the influence of their appetites than women; and their appetites are more depraved by unbridled indulgence and the fastidious contrivances of satiety. Luxury has introduced a refinement in eating, that destroys the constitution; and, a degree of gluttony which is so beastly, that a perception of seemliness of behaviour must be worn out before one being could eat immoderately in the presence of another, and afterwards complain of the oppression that his intemperance naturally produced. Some women, particularly French women, have also lost a sense of decency in this respect; for they will talk very calmly of an indigestion. It were to be wished that idleness was not allowed to generate, on the rank soil of wealth, those swarms of summer insects that feed on putrefaction, we should not then be disgusted by the sight of such brutal excesses.

There is one rule relative to behaviour that, I think, ought to regulate every other; and it is simply to cherish such an habitual respect for mankind as may prevent us from disgusting a fellow-creature for the sake of a present indulgence. The shameful indolence of many married women, and others a little advanced in life, frequently leads them to sin against delicacy. For, though convinced that the person is the band of union between the sexes, yet, how often do they from sheer indolence, or, to enjoy some trifling indulgence, disgust?

The depravity of the appetite which brings the sexes together, has had still more fatal effect. Nature must ever be the standard of taste, the gauge of appetite—yet how grossly is nature insulted by the voluptuary. Leaving the refinements of love out of the question; nature, by making the gratification of an appetite, in this respect, as well as every other, a natural and imperious law to preserve the species, exalts the appetite, and mixes a little mind and affection with a sensual gust. The feelings of a parent mingling with an instinct merely animal, give it dignity; and the man and woman often meeting on account of the child, a mutual interest and affection is excited by the exercise of a common sympathy. Women then having necessarily some duty to fulfil, more noble than to adorn their persons, would not contentedly be the slaves of casual lust; which is now the situation of a very considerable number who are, literally speaking, standing dishes to which every glutton may have access.

I may be told that great as this enormity is, it only affects a devoted part of the sex—devoted for the salvation of the rest. But, false as every assertion might easily be proved, that recommends the sanctioning a small evil to produce a greater good; the mischief does not stop here, for the moral character, and peace of mind, of the chaster part of the sex, is undermined by the conduct of the very women to whom they allow no refuge from guilt: whom they inexorably consign to the exercise of arts that lure their husbands from them, debauch their sons, and force them, let not modest women start, to assume, in some degree, the same character themselves. For I will venture to assert, that all the causes of female weakness, as well as depravity, which I have already enlarged on, branch out of one grand cause—want of chastity in men.

This intemperance, so prevalent, depraves the appetite to such a degree, that a wanton stimulus is necessary to rouse it; but the parental design of nature is forgotten, and the mere person, and that for a moment, alone engrosses the thoughts. So voluptuous, indeed, often grows the lustful prowler, that he refines on female softness. Something more soft than woman is then sought for; till, in Italy and Portugal, men attend the levees of equivocal beings, to sigh for more than female languor.

To satisfy this genus of men, women are made systematically voluptuous, and though they may not all carry their libertinism to the same height, yet this heartless intercourse with the sex, which they allow themselves, depraves both sexes, because the taste of men is vitiated; and women, of all classes, naturally square their behaviour to gratify the taste by which they obtain pleasure and power. Women becoming, consequently, weaker, in

mind and body, than they ought to be, were one of the grand ends of their being taken into the account, that of bearing and nursing children, have not sufficient strength to discharge the first duty of a mother; and sacrificing to lasciviousness the parental affection, that ennobles instinct, either destroy the embryo in the womb, or cast it off when born. Nature in every thing demands respect, and those who violate her laws seldom violate them with impunity. The weak enervated women who particularly catch the attention of libertines, are unfit to be mothers, though they may conceive; so that the rich sensualist, who has rioted among women, spreading depravity and misery, when he wishes to perpetuate his name, receives from his wife only an half-formed being that inherits both its father's and mother's weakness.

Contrasting the humanity of the present age with the barbarism of antiquity, great stress has been laid on the savage custom of exposing the children whom their parents could not maintain; whilst the man of sensibility, who thus, perhaps, complains, by his promiscuous amours produces a most destructive barrenness and contagious flagitiousness of manners. Surely nature never intended that women, by satisfying an appetite, should frustrate the very purpose for which it was implanted?

I have before observed, that men ought to maintain the women whom they have seduced; this would be one means of reforming female manners, and stopping an abuse that has an equally fatal effect on population and morals. Another, no less obvious, would be to turn the attention of woman to the real virtue of chastity; for to little respect has that woman a claim, on the score of modesty, though her reputation may be white as the driven snow, who smiles on the libertine whilst she spurns the victims of his lawless appetites and their own folly.

Besides, she has a taint of the same folly, pure as she esteems herself, when she studiously adorns her person only to be seen by men, to excite respectful sighs, and all the idle homage of what is called innocent gallantry. Did women really respect virtue for its own sake, they would not seek for a compensation in vanity, for the self-denial which they are obliged to practise to preserve their reputation, nor would they associate with men who set reputation at defiance.

The two sexes mutually corrupt and improve each other. This I believe to be an indisputable truth, extending it to every virtue. Chastity, modesty, public spirit, and all the noble train of virtues, on which social virtue and happiness are built, should be understood and cultivated by all mankind, or they will be cultivated to little effect. And, instead of furnishing the vicious or idle with a pretext for violating some sacred duty, by terming it a sexual one, it would be wiser to shew that nature has not made any difference, for

that the unchaste man doubly defeats the purpose of nature, by rendering women barren, and destroying his own constitution, though he avoids the shame that pursues the crime in the other sex. These are the physical consequences, the moral are still more alarming; for virtue is only a nominal distinction when the duties of citizens, husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, and directors of families, become merely the selfish ties of convenience.

Why then do philosophers look for public spirit? Public spirit must be nurtured by private virtue, or it will resemble the factitious sentiment which makes women careful to preserve their reputation, and men their honour. A sentiment that often exists unsupported by virtue, unsupported by that sublime morality which makes the habitual breach of one duty a breach of the whole moral law.

CHAP. IX.

OF THE PERNICIOUS EFFECTS
WHICH ARISE FROM THE
UNNATURAL DISTINCTIONS
ESTABLISHED IN SOCIETY.

From the respect paid to property flow, as from a poisoned fountain, most of the evils and vices which render this world such a dreary scene to the contemplative mind. For it is in the most polished society that noisome reptiles and venomous serpents lurk under the rank herbage; and there is voluptuousness pampered by the still sultry air, which relaxes every good disposition before it ripens into virtue.

One class presses on another; for all are aiming to procure respect on account of their property: and property, once gained, will procure the respect due only to talents and virtue. Men neglect the duties incumbent on man, yet are treated like demi-gods; religion is also separated from morality by a ceremonial veil, yet men wonder that the world is almost, literally speaking, a den of sharpers or oppressors.

There is a homely proverb, which speaks a shrewd truth, that whoever the devil finds idle he will employ. And what but habitual idleness can hereditary wealth and titles produce? For man is so constituted that he can only attain a proper use of his faculties by exercising them, and will not exercise them unless necessity, of some kind, first set the wheels in motion. Virtue likewise can only be acquired by the discharge of relative duties; but

the importance of these sacred duties will scarcely be felt by the being who is cajoled out of his humanity by the flattery of sycophants. There must be more equality established in society, or morality will never gain ground, and this virtuous equality will not rest firmly even when founded on a rock, if one half of mankind be chained to its bottom by fate, for they will be continually undermining it through ignorance or pride.

It is vain to expect virtue from women till they are, in some degree, independent of men; nay, it is vain to expect that strength of natural affection, which would make them good wives and mothers. Whilst they are absolutely dependent on their husbands they will be cunning, mean, and selfish, and the men who can be gratified by the fawning fondness of spaniel-like affection, have not much delicacy, for love is not to be bought, in any sense of the words, its silken wings are instantly shrivelled up when any thing beside a return in kind is sought. Yet whilst wealth enervates men; and women live, as it were, by their personal charms, how can we expect them to discharge those ennobling duties which equally require exertion and self-denial. Hereditary property sophisticates the mind, and the unfortunate victims to it, if I may so express myself, swathed from their birth, seldom exert the locomotive faculty of body or mind; and, thus viewing every thing through one medium, and that a false one, they are unable to discern in what true merit and happiness consist. False, indeed, must be the light when the drapery of situation hides the man, and makes him stalk in masquerade, dragging from one scene of dissipation to another the nerveless limbs that hang with stupid listlessness, and rolling round the vacant eye which plainly tells us that there is no mind at home.

I mean, therefore, to infer that the society is not properly organized which does not compel men and women to discharge their respective duties, by making it the only way to acquire that countenance from their fellow-creatures, which every human being wishes some way to attain. The respect, consequently, which is paid to wealth and mere personal charms, is a true north-east blast, that blights the tender blossoms of affection and virtue. Nature has wisely attached affections to duties, to sweeten toil, and to give that vigour to the exertions of reason which only the heart can give. But, the affection which is put on merely because it is the appropriated insignia of a certain character, when its duties are not fulfilled, is one of the empty compliments which vice and folly are obliged to pay to virtue and the real nature of things.

To illustrate my opinion, I need only observe, that when a woman is admired for her beauty, and suffers herself to be so far intoxicated by the admiration she receives, as to neglect to discharge the indispensable duty of a

mother, she sins against herself by neglecting to cultivate an affection that would equally tend to make her useful and happy. True happiness, I mean all the contentment, and virtuous satisfaction, that can be snatched in this imperfect state, must arise from well regulated affections; and an affection includes a duty. Men are not aware of the misery they cause, and the vicious weakness they cherish, by only inciting women to render themselves pleasing; they do not consider that they thus make natural and artificial duties clash, by sacrificing the comfort and respectability of a woman's life to voluptuous notions of beauty, when in nature they all harmonize.

Cold would be the heart of a husband, were he not rendered unnatural by early debauchery, who did not feel more delight at seeing his child suckled by its mother, than the most artful wanton tricks could ever raise; yet this natural way of cementing the matrimonial tie, and twisting esteem with fonder recollections, wealth leads women to spurn. To preserve their beauty, and wear the flowery crown of the day, which gives them a kind of right to reign for a short time over the sex, they neglect to stamp impressions on their husbands' hearts, that would be remembered with more tenderness when the snow on the head began to chill the bosom, than even their virgin charms. The maternal solicitude of a reasonable affectionate woman is very interesting, and the chastened dignity with which a mother returns the caresses that she and her child receive from a father who has been fulfilling the serious duties of his station, is not only a respectable, but a beautiful sight. So singular, indeed, are my feelings, and I have endeavoured not to catch factitious ones, that after having been fatigued with the sight of insipid grandeur and the slavish ceremonies that with cumbersome pomp supplied the place of domestic affections, I have turned to some other scene to relieve my eye by resting it on the refreshing green every where scattered by nature. I have then viewed with pleasure a woman nursing her children, and discharging the duties of her station with, perhaps, merely a servant maid to take off her hands the servile part of the household business. I have seen her prepare herself and children, with only the luxury of cleanliness, to receive her husband, who returning weary home in the evening found smiling babes and a clean hearth. My heart has loitered in the midst of the group, and has even throbbed with sympathetic emotion, when the scraping of the well known foot has raised a pleasing tumult.

Whilst my benevolence has been gratified by contemplating this artless picture, I have thought that a couple of this description, equally necessary and independent of each other, because each fulfilled the respective duties of their station, possessed all that life could give.—Raised sufficiently above abject poverty not to be obliged to weigh the consequence of every

farthing they spend, and having sufficient to prevent their attending to a frigid system of œconomy, which narrows both heart and mind. I declare, so vulgar are my conceptions, that I know not what is wanted to render this the happiest as well as the most respectable situation in the world, but a taste for literature, to throw a little variety and interest into social converse, and some superfluous money to give to the needy and to buy books. For it is not pleasant when the heart is opened by compassion and the head active in arranging plans of usefulness, to have a prim urchin continually twitching back the elbow to prevent the hand from drawing out an almost empty purse, whispering at the same time some prudential maxim about the priority of justice.

Destructive, however, as riches and inherited honours are to the human character, women are more debased and cramped, if possible, by them, than men, because men may still, in some degree, unfold their faculties by becoming soldiers and statesmen.

As soldiers, I grant, they can now only gather, for the most part, vain glorious laurels, whilst they adjust to a hair the European balance, taking especial care that no bleak northern nook or sound incline the beam. But the days of true heroism are over, when a citizen fought for his country like a Fabricius or a Washington, and then returned to his farm to let his virtuous fervour run in a more placid, but not a less salutary, stream. No, our British heroes are oftener sent from the gaming table than from the plow; and their passions have been rather inflamed by hanging with dumb suspense on the turn of a die, than sublimated by panting after the adventurous march of virtue in the historic page.

The statesman, it is true, might with more propriety quit the Faro Bank, or card-table, to guide the helm, for he has still but to shuffle and trick. The whole system of British politics, if system it may courteously be called, consisting in multiplying dependents and contriving taxes which grind the poor to pamper the rich; thus a war, or any wild goose chase, is, as the vulgar use the phrase, a lucky turn-up of patronage for the minister, whose chief merit is the art of keeping himself in place. It is not necessary then that he should have bowels for the poor, so he can secure for his family the odd trick. Or should some shew of respect, for what is termed with ignorant ostentation an Englishman's birth-right, be expedient to bubble the gruff mastiff that he has to lead by the nose, he can make an empty shew, very safely, by giving his single voice, and suffering his light squadron to file off to the other side. And when a question of humanity is agitated he may dip a sop in the milk of human kindness, to silence Cerberus, and talk of the interest which his heart takes in an attempt to make the earth

no longer cry for vengeance as it sucks in its children's blood, though his cold hand may at the very moment rivet their chains, by sanctioning the abominable traffick. A minister is no longer a minister, than while he can carry a point, which he is determined to carry.—Yet it is not necessary that a minister should feel like a man, when a bold push might shake his feat.

But, to have done with these episodal observations, let me return to the more specious slavery which chains the very soul of woman, keeping her for ever under the bondage of ignorance.

The preposterous distinctions of rank, which render civilization a curse, by dividing the world between voluptuous tyrants, and cunning envious dependents, corrupt, almost equally, every class of people, because respectability is not attached to the discharge of the relative duties of life, but to the station, and when the duties are not fulfilled the affections cannot gain sufficient strength to fortify the virtue of which they are the natural reward. Still there are some loop-holes out of which a man may creep, and dare to think and act for himself; but for a woman it is an herculean task, because she has difficulties peculiar to her sex to overcome, which require almost super-human powers.

A truly benevolent legislator always endeavours to make it the interest of each individual to be virtuous; and thus private virtue becoming the cement of public happiness, an orderly whole is consolidated by the tendency of all the parts towards a common centre. But, the private or public virtue of woman is very problematical; for Rousseau, and a numerous list of male writers, insist that she should all her life be subjected to a severe restraint, that of propriety. Why subject her to propriety—blind propriety, if she be capable of acting from a nobler spring, if she be an heir of immortality? Is sugar always to be produced by vital blood? Is one half of the human species, like the poor African slaves, to be subject to prejudices that brutalize them, when principles would be a surer guard, only to sweeten the cup of man? Is not this indirectly to deny woman reason? for a gift is a mockery, if it be unfit for use.

Women are, in common with men, rendered weak and luxurious by the relaxing pleasures which wealth procures; but added to this they are made slaves to their persons, and must render them alluring that man may lend them his reason to guide their tottering steps aright. Or should they be ambitious, they must govern their tyrants by sinister tricks, for without rights there cannot be any incumbent duties. The laws respecting woman, which I mean to discuss in a future part, make an absurd unit of a man and his wife; and then, by the easy transition of only considering him as responsible, she is reduced to a mere cypher.

The being who discharges the duties of its station is independent; and, speaking of women at large, their first duty is to themselves as rational creatures, and the next, in point of importance, as citizens, is that, which includes so many, of a mother. The rank in life which dispenses with their fulfilling this duty, necessarily degrades them by making them mere dolls. Or, should they turn to something more important than merely fitting drapery upon a smooth block, their minds are only occupied by some soft platonian attachment; or, the actual management of an intrigue may keep their thoughts in motion; for when they neglect domestic duties, they have it not in their power to take the field and march and counter-march like soldiers, or wrangle in the senate to keep their faculties from rusting.

I know that, as a proof of the inferiority of the sex, Rousseau has exultingly exclaimed, How can they leave the nursery for the camp!—And the camp has by some moralists been termed the school of the most heroic virtues; though, I think, it would puzzle a keen casuist to prove the reasonableness of the greater number of wars that have dubbed heroes. I do not mean to consider this question critically; because, having frequently viewed these freaks of ambition as the first natural mode of civilization, when the ground must be torn up, and the woods cleared by fire and sword, I do not choose to call them pests; but surely the present system of war has little connection with virtue of any denomination, being rather the school of *finesse* and effeminacy, than of fortitude.

Yet, if defensive war, the only justifiable war, in the present advanced state of society, where virtue can shew its face and ripen amidst the rigours which purify the air on the mountain's top, were alone to be adopted as just and glorious, the true heroism of antiquity might again animate female bosoms.—But fair and softly, gentle reader, male or female, do not alarm thyself, for though I have compared the character of a modern soldier with that of a civilized woman, I am not going to advise them to turn their distaff into a musket, though I sincerely wish to see the bayonet converted into a pruning-hook. I only recreated an imagination, fatigued by contemplating the vices and follies which all proceed from a feculent stream of wealth that has muddied the pure rills of natural affection, by supposing that society will some time or other be so constituted, that man must necessarily fulfil the duties of a citizen, or be despised, and that while he was employed in any of the departments of civil life, his wife, also an active citizen, should be equally intent to manage her family, educate her children, and assist her neighbours.

But, to render her really virtuous and useful, she must not, if she discharge her civil duties, want, individually, the protection of civil laws; she

must not be dependent on her husband's bounty for her subsistence during his life, or support after his death—for how can a being be generous who has nothing of its own? or, virtuous, who is not free? The wife, in the present state of things, who is faithful to her husband, and neither suckles nor educates her children, scarcely deserves the name of a wife, and has no right to that of a citizen. But take away natural rights, and duties become null.

Women then must be considered as only the wanton solace of men, when they become so weak in mind and body, that they cannot exert themselves, unless to pursue some frothy pleasure, or to invent some frivolous fashion. What can be a more melancholy sight to a thinking mind, than to look into the numerous carriages that drive helter-skelter about this metropolis in a morning full of pale-faced creatures who are flying from themselves. I have often wished, with Dr. Johnson, to place some of them in a little shop with half a dozen children looking up to their languid countenances for support. I am much mistaken, if some latent vigour would not soon give health and spirit to their eyes, and some lines drawn by the exercise of reason on the blank cheeks, which before were only undulated by dimples, might restore lost dignity to the character, or rather enable it to attain the true dignity of its nature. Virtue is not to be acquired even by speculation, much less by the negative supineness that wealth naturally generates.

Besides, when poverty is more disgraceful than even vice, is not morality cut to the quick? Still to avoid misconstruction, though I consider that women in the common walks of life are called to fulfil the duties of wives and mothers, by religion and reason, I cannot help lamenting that women of a superiour cast have not a road open by which they can pursue more extensive plans of usefulness and independence. I may excite laughter, by dropping an hint, which I mean to pursue, some future time, for I really think that women ought to have representatives, instead of being arbitrarily governed without having any direct share allowed them in the deliberations of government.

But, as the whole system of representation is now, in this country, only a convenient handle for despotism, they need not complain, for they are as well represented as a numerous class of hard working mechanics, who pay for the support of royalty when they can scarcely stop their children's mouths with bread. How are they represented whose very sweat supports the splendid stud of an heir apparent, or varnishes the chariot of some female favourite who looks down on shame? Taxes on the very necessaries of life, enable an endless tribe of idle princes and princesses to pass with stupid pomp before a gaping crowd, who almost worship the very parade

which costs them so dear. This is mere gothic grandeur, something like the barbarous useless parade of having sentinels on horseback at Whitehall, which I could never view without a mixture of contempt and indignation.

How strangely must the mind be sophisticated when this sort of state impresses it! But, till these monuments of folly are levelled by virtue, similar follies will leaven the whole mass. For the same character, in some degree, will prevail in the aggregate of society: and the refinements of luxury, or the vicious repinings of envious poverty, will equally banish virtue from society, considered as the characteristic of that society, or only allow it to appear as one of the stripes of the harlequin coat, worn by the civilized man.

In the superiour ranks of life, every duty is done by deputies, as if duties could ever be waived, and the vain pleasures which consequent idleness forces the rich to pursue, appear so enticing to the next rank, that the numerous scramblers for wealth sacrifice every thing to tread on their heels. The most sacred trusts are then considered as sinecures, because they were procured by interest, and only sought to enable a man to keep *good company*. Women, in particular, all want to be ladies. Which is simply to have nothing to do, but listlessly to go they scarcely care where, for they cannot tell what.

But what have women to do in society? I may be asked, but to loiter with easy grace; surely you would not condemn them all to suckle fools and chronicle small beer! No. Women might certainly study the art of healing, and be physicians as well as nurses. And midwifery, decency seems to allot to them, though I am afraid the word midwife, in our dictionaries, will soon give place to *accoucheur*, and one proof of the former delicacy of the sex be effaced from the language.

They might, also, study politics, and settle their benevolence on the broadest basis; for the reading of history will scarcely be more useful than the perusal of romances, if read as mere biography; if the character of the times, the political improvements, arts, &c. be not observed. In short, if it be not considered as the history of man; and not of particular men, who filled a niche in the temple of fame, and dropped into the black rolling stream of time, that silently sweeps all before it, into the shapeless void called—eternity.—For shape, can it be called, “that shape hath none?”

Business of various kinds, they might likewise pursue, if they were educated in a more orderly manner, which might save many from common and legal prostitution. Women would not then marry for a support, as men accept of places under government, and neglect the implied duties; nor would an attempt to earn their own subsistence, a most laudable one! sink

them almost to the level of those poor abandoned creatures who live by prostitution. For are not milliners and mantua-makers reckoned the next class? The few employments open to women, so far from being liberal, are menial; and when a superiour education enables them to take charge of the education of children as governesses, they are not treated like the tutors of sons, though even clerical tutors are not always treated in a manner calculated to render them respectable in the eyes of their pupils, to say nothing of the private comfort of the individual. But as women educated like gentlewomen, are never designed for the humiliating situation which necessity sometimes forces them to fill; these situations are considered in the light of a degradation; and they know little of the human heart, who need to be told, that nothing so painfully sharpens sensibility as such a fall in life.

Some of these women might be restrained from marrying by a proper spirit or delicacy, and others may not have had it in their power to escape in this pitiful way from servitude; is not that government then very defective, and very unmindful of the happiness of one half of its members, that does not provide for honest, independent women, by encouraging them to fill respectable stations? But in order to render their private virtue a public benefit, they must have a civil existence in the state, married or single; else we shall continually see some worthy woman, whose sensibility has been rendered painfully acute by undeserved contempt, droop like “the lily broken down by a plow-share.”

It is a melancholy truth; yet such is the blessed effect of civilization! the most respectable women are the most oppressed; and, unless they have understandings far superiour to the common run of understandings, taking in both sexes, they must, from being treated like contemptible beings, become contemptible. How many women thus waste life away the prey of discontent, who might have practised as physicians, regulated a farm, managed a shop, and stood erect, supported by their own industry, instead of hanging their heads surcharged with the dew of sensibility, that consumes the beauty to which it at first gave lustre; nay, I doubt whether pity and love are so near akin as poets feign, for I have seldom seen much compassion excited by the helplessness of females, unless they were fair; then, perhaps, pity was the soft hand-maid of love, or the harbinger of lust.

How much more respectable is the woman who earns her own bread by fulfilling any duty, than the most accomplished beauty!—beauty did I say?—so sensible am I of the beauty of moral loveliness, or the harmonious propriety that attunes the passions of a well-regulated mind, that I blush at making the comparison; yet I sigh to think how few women aim at attaining

this respectability by withdrawing from the giddy whirl of pleasure, or the indolent calm that stupifies the good sort of women it sucks in.

Proud of their weakness, however, they must always be protected, guarded from care, and all the rough toils that dignify the mind.—If this be the fiat of fate, if they will make themselves insignificant and contemptible, sweetly to waste “life away,” let them not expect to be valued when their beauty fades, for it is the fate of the fairest flowers to be admired and pulled to pieces by the careless hand that plucked them. In how many ways do I wish, from the purest benevolence, to impress this truth on my sex; yet I fear that they will not listen to a truth that dear bought experience has brought home to many an agitated bosom, nor willingly resign the privileges of rank and sex for the privileges of humanity, to which those have no claim who do not discharge its duties.

Those writers are particularly useful, in my opinion, who make man feel for man, independent of the station he fills, or the drapery of factitious sentiments. I then would fain convince reasonable men of the importance of some of my remarks; and prevail on them to weigh dispassionately the whole tenor of my observations.—I appeal to their understandings; and, as a fellow-creature, claim, in the name of my sex, some interest in their hearts. I entreat them to assist to emancipate their companion, to make her a *help meet* for them!

Would men but generously snap our chains, and be content with rational fellowship instead of slavish obedience, they would find us more observant daughters, more affectionate sisters, more faithful wives, more reasonable mothers—in a word, better citizens. We should then love them with true affection, because we should learn to respect ourselves; and the peace of mind of a worthy man would not be interrupted by the idle vanity of his wife, nor the babes sent to nestle in a strange bosom, having never found a home in their mother’s.

CHAP. X.

PARENTAL AFFECTION.

Parental affection is, perhaps, the blindest modification of perverse self-love; for we have not, like the French,* two terms to distinguish the pursuit of a natural and reasonable desire, from the ignorant calculations of weakness. Parents often love their children in the most brutal manner, and sacrifice every relative duty to promote their advancement in the world.—To promote, such is the perversity of unprincipled prejudices, the future welfare of the very beings whose present existence they imbitter by the most despotic stretch of power. Power, in fact, is ever true to its vital principle, for in every shape it would reign without controul or inquiry. Its throne is built across a dark abyss, which no eye must dare to explore, lest the baseless fabric should totter under investigation. Obedience, unconditional obedience, is the catch-word of tyrants of every description, and to render “assurance doubly sure,” one kind of despotism supports another. Tyrants would have cause to tremble if reason were to become the rule of duty in any of the relations of life, for the light might spread till perfect day appeared. And when it did appear, how would men smile at the sight of the bugbears at which they started during the night of ignorance, or the twilight of timid inquiry.

Parental affection, indeed, in many minds, is but a pretext to tyrannize where it can be done with impunity, for only good and wise men are content with the respect that will bear discussion. Convinced that they have a right to what they insist on, they do not fear reason, or dread the sifting of

**L'amour propre. L'amour de soi même.*

subjects that recur to natural justice: because they firmly believe that the more enlightened the human mind becomes the deeper root will just and simple principles take. They do not rest in expedients, or grant that what is metaphysically true can be practically false; but disdain the shifts of the moment they calmly wait till time, sanctioning innovation, silences the hiss of selfishness or envy.

If the power of reflecting on the past, and darting the keen eye of contemplation into futurity, be the grand privilege of man, it must be granted that some people enjoy this prerogative in a very limited degree. Every thing new appears to them wrong; and not able to distinguish the possible from the monstrous, they fear where no fear should find a place, running from the light of reason, as if it were a firebrand; yet the limits of the possible have never been defined to stop the sturdy innovator's hand.

Woman, however, a slave in every situation to prejudice, seldom exerts enlightened maternal affection; for she either neglects her children, or spoils them by improper indulgence. Besides, the affection of some women for their children is, as I have before termed it, frequently very brutish: for it eradicates every spark of humanity. Justice, truth, every thing is sacrificed by these Rebekahs, and for the sake of their *own* children they violate the most sacred duties, forgetting the common relationship that binds the whole family on earth together. Yet, reason seems to say, that they who suffer one duty, or affection, to swallow up the rest, have not sufficient heart or mind to fulfil that one conscientiously. It then loses the venerable aspect of a duty, and assumes the fantastic form of a whim.

As the care of children in their infancy is one of the grand duties annexed to the female character by nature, this duty would afford many forcible arguments for strengthening the female understanding, if it were properly considered.

The formation of the mind must be begun very early, and the temper, in particular, requires the most judicious attention—an attention which women cannot pay who only love their children because they are their children, and seek no further for the foundation of their duty, than in the feelings of the moment. It is this want of reason in their affections which makes women so often run into extremes, and either be the most fond or most careless and unnatural mothers.

To be a good mother—a woman must have sense, and that independence of mind which few women possess who are taught to depend entirely on their husbands. Meek wives are, in general, foolish mothers; wanting their children to love them best, and take their part, in secret, against the father, who is held up as a scarecrow. When chastisement is necessary,

though they have offended the mother, the father must inflict the punishment; he must be the judge in all disputes: but I shall more fully discuss this subject when I treat of private education, I now only mean to insist, that unless the understanding of woman be enlarged, and her character rendered more firm, by being allowed to govern her own conduct, she will never have sufficient sense or command of temper to manage her children properly. Her parental affection, indeed, scarcely deserves the name, when it does not lead her to suckle her children, because the discharge of this duty is equally calculated to inspire maternal and filial affection: and it is the indispensable duty of men and women to fulfil the duties which give birth to affections that are the surest preservatives against vice. Natural affection, as it is termed, I believe to be a very faint tie, affections must grow out of the habitual exercise of a mutual sympathy; and what sympathy does a mother exercise who sends her babe to a nurse, and only takes it from a nurse to send it to school?

In the exercise of their maternal feelings providence has furnished women with a natural substitute for love, when the lover becomes only a friend, and mutual confidence takes place of overstrained admiration—a child then gently twists the relaxing cord, and a mutual care produces a new mutual sympathy.—But a child, though a pledge of affection, will not enliven it, if both father and mother be content to transfer the charge to hirelings; for they who do their duty by proxy should not murmur if they miss the reward of duty—parental affection produces filial duty.

CHAP. XI.

DUTY TO PARENTS.

There seems to be an indolent propensity in man to make prescription always take place of reason, and to place every duty on an arbitrary foundation. The rights of kings are deduced in a direct line from the King of kings; and that of parents from our first parent.

Why do we thus go back for principles that should always rest on the same base, and have the same weight to-day that they had a thousand years ago—and not a jot more? If parents discharge their duty they have a strong hold and sacred claim on the gratitude of their children; but few parents are willing to receive the respectful affection of their offspring on such terms. They demand blind obedience, because they do not merit a reasonable service: and to render these demands of weakness and ignorance more binding, a mysterious sanctity is spread round the most arbitrary principle; for what other name can be given to the blind duty of obeying vicious or weak beings merely because they obeyed a powerful instinct?

The simple definition of the reciprocal duty, which naturally subsists between parent and child, may be given in a few words: The parent who pays proper attention to helpless infancy has a right to require the same attention when the feebleness of age comes upon him. But to subjugate a rational being to the mere will of another, after he is of age to answer to society for his own conduct, is a most cruel and undue stretch of power; and, perhaps, as injurious to morality as those religious systems which do not allow right and wrong to have any existence, but in the Divine will.

I never knew a parent who had paid more than common attention to his children, disregarded;* on the contrary, the early habit of relying almost implicitly on the opinion of a respected parent is not easily shook, even when matured reason convinces the child that his father is not the wisest man in the world. This weakness, for a weakness it is, though the epithet amiable may be tacked to it, a reasonable man must steel himself against; for the absurd duty, too often inculcated, of obeying a parent only on account of his being a parent, shackles the mind, and prepares it for a slavish submission to any power but reason.

I distinguish between the natural and accidental duty due to parents.

The parent who sedulously endeavours to form the heart and enlarge the understanding of his child, has given that dignity to the discharge of a duty, common to the whole animal world, that only reason can give. This is the parental affection of humanity, and leaves instinctive natural affection far behind. Such a parent acquires all the rights of the most sacred friendship, and his advice, even when his child is advanced in life, demands serious consideration.

With respect to marriage, though after one and twenty a parent seems to have no right to withhold his consent on any account; yet twenty years of solicitude call for a return, and the son ought, at least, to promise not to marry for two or three years, should the object of his choice not entirely meet with the approbation of his first friend.

But, respect for parents is, generally speaking, a much more debasing principle; it is only a selfish respect for property. The father who is blindly obeyed, is obeyed from sheer weakness, or from motives that degrade the human character.

A great proportion of the misery that wanders, in hideous forms, around the world, is allowed to rise from the negligence of parents; and still these are the people who are most tenacious of what they term a natural right, though it be subversive of the birth-right of man, the right of acting according to the direction of his own reason.

I have already very frequently had occasion to observe, that vicious or indolent people are always eager to profit by enforcing arbitrary privileges; and, generally, in the same proportion as they neglect the discharge of the duties which alone render the privileges reasonable. This is at the bottom a dictate of common sense, or the instinct of self-defence, peculiar to ignorant weakness; resembling that instinct, which makes a fish muddy the water it swims in to elude its enemy, instead of boldly facing it in the clear stream.

*Dr. Johnson makes the same observation.

From the clear stream of argument, indeed, the supporters of prescription, of every denomination, fly; and, taking refuge in the darkness, which, in the language of sublime poetry, has been supposed to surround the throne of Omnipotence, they dare to demand that implicit respect which is only due to His unsearchable ways. But, let me not be thought presumptuous, the darkness which hides our God from us, only respects speculative truths—it never obscures moral ones, they shine clearly, for God is light, and never, by the constitution of our nature, requires the discharge of a duty, the reasonableness of which does not beam on us when we open our eyes.

The indolent parent of high rank may, it is true, extort a shew of respect from his child, and females on the continent are particularly subject to the views of their families, who never think of consulting their inclination, or providing for the comfort of the poor victims of their pride. The consequence is notorious; these dutiful daughters become adulteresses, and neglect the education of their children, from whom they, in their turn, exact the same kind of obedience.

Females, it is true, in all countries, are too much under the dominion of their parents; and few parents think of addressing their children in the following manner, though it is in this reasonable way that Heaven seems to command the whole human race. It is your interest to obey me till you can judge for yourself; and the Almighty Father of all has implanted an affection in me to serve as a guard to you whilst your reason is unfolding; but when your mind arrives at maturity, you must only obey me, or rather respect my opinions, so far as they coincide with the light that is breaking in on your own mind.

A slavish bondage to parents cramps every faculty of the mind; and Mr. Locke very judiciously observes, that “if the mind be curbed and humbled too much in children; if their spirits be abased and broken much by too strict an hand over them; they lose all their vigour and industry.” This strict hand may in some degree account for the weakness of women; for girls, from various causes, are more kept down by their parents, in every sense of the word, than boys. The duty expected from them is, like all the duties arbitrarily imposed on women, more from a sense of propriety, more out of respect for decorum, than reason; and thus taught slavishly to submit to their parents, they are prepared for the slavery of marriage. I may be told that a number of women are not slaves in the marriage state. True, but they then become tyrants; for it is not rational freedom, but a lawless kind of power resembling the authority exercised by the favourites of absolute monarchs, which they obtain by debasing means. I do not, likewise, dream

of insinuating that either boys or girls are always slaves, I only insist that when they are obliged to submit to authority blindly, their faculties are weakened, and their tempers rendered imperious or abject. I also lament that parents, indolently availing themselves of a supposed privilege, damp the first faint glimmering of reason, rendering at the same time the duty, which they are so anxious to enforce, an empty name; because they will not let it rest on the only basis on which a duty can rest securely: for unless it be founded on knowledge, it cannot gain sufficient strength to resist the squalls of passion, or the silent sapping of self-love. But it is not the parents who have given the surest proof of their affection for their children, or, to speak more properly, who by fulfilling their duty, have allowed a natural parental affection to take root in their hearts, the child of exercised sympathy and reason, and not the over-weening offspring of selfish pride, who most vehemently insist on their children submitting to their will merely because it is their will. On the contrary, the parent, who sets a good example, patiently lets that example work; and it seldom fails to produce its natural effect—filial reverence.

Children cannot be taught too early to submit to reason, the true definition of that necessity, which Rousseau insisted on, without defining it; for to submit to reason is to submit to the nature of things, and to that God, who formed them so, to promote our real interest.

Why should the minds of children be warped as they just begin to expand, only to favour the indolence of parents, who insist on a privilege without being willing to pay the price fixed by nature? I have before had occasion to observe, that a right always includes a duty, and I think it may, likewise, fairly be inferred, that they forfeit the right, who do not fulfil the duty.

It is easier, I grant, to command than reason; but it does not follow from hence that children cannot comprehend the reason why they are made to do certain things habitually: for, from a steady adherence to a few simple principles of conduct flows that salutary power which a judicious parent gradually gains over a child's mind. And this power becomes strong indeed, if tempered by an even display of affection brought home to the child's heart. For, I believe, as a general rule, it must be allowed that the affection which we inspire always resembles that we cultivate; so that natural affections, which have been supposed almost distinct from reason, may be found more nearly connected with judgment than is commonly allowed. Nay, as another proof of the necessity of cultivating the female understanding, it is but just to observe, that the affections seem to have a kind of animal capriciousness when they merely reside in the heart.

It is the irregular exercise of parental authority that first injures the mind, and to these irregularities girls are more subject than boys. The will of those who never allow their will to be disputed, unless they happen to be in a good humour, when they relax proportionally, is almost always unreasonable. To elude this arbitrary authority girls very early learn the lessons which they afterwards practise on their husbands; for I have frequently seen a little sharp-faced miss rule a whole family, excepting that now and then mamma's angry will burst out of some accidental cloud;—either her hair was ill dressed,* or she had lost more money at cards, the night before, than she was willing to own to her husband; or some such moral cause of anger.

After observing sallies of this kind, I have been led into a melancholy train of reflection respecting females, concluding that when their first affection must lead them astray, or make their duties clash till they rest on mere whims and customs, little can be expected from them as they advance in life. How indeed can an instructor remedy this evil? for to teach them virtue on any solid principle is to teach them to despise their parents. Children cannot, ought not, to be taught to make allowance for the faults of their parents, because every such allowance weakens the force of reason in their minds, and makes them still more indulgent to their own. It is one of the most sublime virtues of maturity that leads us to be severe with respect to ourselves, and forbearing to others; but children should only be taught the simple virtues, for if they begin too early to make allowance for human passions and manners, they wear off the fine edge of the criterion by which they should regulate their own, and become unjust in the same proportion as they grow indulgent.

The affections of children, and weak people, are always selfish; they love their relatives, because they are beloved by them, and not on account of their virtues. Yet, till esteem and love are blended together in the first affection, and reason made the foundation of the first duty, morality will stumble at the threshold. But, till society is very differently constituted, parents, I fear, will still insist on being obeyed, because they will be obeyed, and constantly endeavour to settle that power on a Divine right which will not bear the investigation of reason.

*I myself heard a little girl once say to a servant, "My mamma has been scolding me finely this morning, because her hair was not dressed to please her." Though this remark was pert, it was just. And what respect could a girl acquire for such a parent without doing violence to reason?

CHAP. XII.

ON NATIONAL EDUCATION.

The good effects resulting from attention to private education will ever be very confined, and the parent who really puts his own hand to the plow, will always, in some degree, be disappointed, till education becomes a grand national concern. A man cannot retire into a desert with his child, and if he did he could not bring himself back to childhood, and become the proper friend and play-fellow of an infant or youth. And when children are confined to the society of men and women, they very soon acquire that kind of premature manhood which stops the growth of every vigorous power of mind or body. In order to open their faculties they should be excited to think for themselves; and this can only be done by mixing a number of children together, and making them jointly pursue the same objects.

A child very soon contracts a benumbing indolence of mind, which he has seldom sufficient vigour afterwards to shake off, when he only asks a question instead of seeking for information, and then relies implicitly on the answer he receives. With his equals in age this could never be the case, and the subjects of inquiry, though they might be influenced, would not be entirely under the direction of men, who frequently damp, if not destroy, abilities, by bringing them forward too hastily: and too hastily they will infallibly be brought forward, if the child be confined to the society of a man, however sagacious that man may be.

Besides, in youth the seeds of every affection should be sown, and the respectful regard, which is felt for a parent, is very different from the social affections that are to constitute the happiness of life as it advances. Of these equality is the basis, and an intercourse of sentiments unlogged by

that observant seriousness which prevents disputation, though it may not enforce submission. Let a child have ever such an affection for his parent, he will always languish to play and prattle with children; and the very respect he feels, for filial esteem always has a dash of fear mixed with it, will, if it do not teach him cunning, at least prevent him from pouring out the little secrets which first open the heart to friendship and confidence, gradually leading to more expansive benevolence. Added to this, he will never acquire that frank ingenuousness of behaviour, which young people can only attain by being frequently in society where they dare to speak what they think; neither afraid of being reprov'd for their presumption, nor laughed at for their folly.

Forcibly impressed by the reflections which the sight of schools, as they are at present conducted, naturally suggested, I have formerly delivered my opinion rather warmly in favour of a private education; but further experience has led me to view the subject in a different light. I still, however, think schools, as they are now regulated, the hot-beds of vice and folly, and the knowledge of human nature, supposed to be attained there, merely cunning selfishness.

At school boys become gluttons and slovens, and, instead of cultivating domestic affections, very early rush into the libertinism which destroys the constitution before it is formed; hardening the heart as it weakens the understanding.

I should, in fact, be averse to boarding-schools, if it were for no other reason than the unsettled state of mind which the expectation of the vacations produce. On these the children's thoughts are fixed with eager anticipating hopes, for, at least, to speak with moderation, half of the time, and when they arrive they are spent in total dissipation and beastly indulgence.

But, on the contrary, when they are brought up at home, though they may pursue a plan of study in a more orderly manner than can be adopted when near a fourth part of the year is actually spent in idleness, and as much more in regret and anticipation; yet they there acquire too high an opinion of their own importance, from being allowed to tyrannize over servants, and from the anxiety expressed by most mothers, on the score of manners, who, eager to teach the accomplishments of a gentleman, stifle, in their birth, the virtues of a man. Thus brought into company when they ought to be seriously employed, and treated like men when they are still boys, they become vain and effeminate.

The only way to avoid two extremes equally injurious to morality, would be to contrive some way of combining a public and private education. Thus to make men citizens two natural steps might be taken, which seem directly

to lead to the desired point; for the domestic affections, that first open the heart to the various modifications of humanity, would be cultivated, whilst the children were nevertheless allowed to spend great part of their time, on terms of equality, with other children.

I still recollect, with pleasure, the country day school; where a boy trudged in the morning, wet or dry, carrying his books, and his dinner, if it were at a considerable distance; a servant did not then lead master by the hand, for, when he had once put on coat and breeches, he was allowed to shift for himself, and return alone in the evening to recount the feats of the day close at the parental knee. His father's house was his home, and was ever after fondly remembered; nay, I appeal to many superiour men, who were educated in this manner, whether the recollection of some shady lane where they conned their lesson; or, of some stile, where they sat making a kite, or mending a bat, has not endeared their country to them?

But, what boy ever recollected with pleasure the years he spent in close confinement, at an academy near London? unless, indeed, he should, by chance, remember the poor scare-crow of an usher, whom he tormented; or, the tartman, from whom he caught a cake, to devour it with a cattish appetite of selfishness. At boarding-schools of every description, the relaxation of the junior boys is mischief; and of the senior, vice. Besides, in great schools, what can be more prejudicial to the moral character than the system of tyranny and abject slavery which is established amongst the boys, to say nothing of the slavery to forms, which makes religion worse than a farce? For what good can be expected from the youth who receives the sacrament of the Lord's supper, to avoid forfeiting half a guinea, which he probably afterwards spends in some sensual manner? Half the employment of the youths is to elude the necessity of attending public worship; and well they may, for such a constant repetition of the same thing must be a very irksome restraint on their natural vivacity. As these ceremonies have the most fatal effect on their morals, and as a ritual performed by the lips, when the heart and mind are far away, is not now stored up by our church as a bank to draw on for the fees of the poor souls in purgatory, why should they not be abolished?

But the fear of innovation, in this country, extends to every thing.— This is only a covert fear, the apprehensive timidity of indolent slugs, who guard, by sliming it over, the snug place, which they consider in the light of an hereditary estate; and eat, drink, and enjoy themselves, instead of fulfilling the duties, excepting a few empty forms, for which it was endowed. These are the people who most strenuously insist on the will of the founder

being observed, crying out against all reformation, as if it were a violation of justice. I am now alluding particularly to the relics of popery retained in our colleges, when the protestant members seem to be such sticklers for the established church; but their zeal never makes them lose sight of the spoil of ignorance, which rapacious priests of superstitious memory have scraped together. No, wise in their generation, they venerate the prescriptive right of possession, as a strong hold, and still let the sluggish bell tinkle to prayers, as during the days when the elevation of the host was supposed to atone for the sins of the people, lest one reformation should lead to another, and the spirit kill the letter. These Romish customs have the most baneful effect on the morals of our clergy; for the idle vermin who two or three times a day perform in the most slovenly manner a service which they think useless, but call their duty, soon lose a sense of duty. At college, forced to attend or evade public worship, they acquire an habitual contempt for the very service, the performance of which is to enable them to live in idleness. It is mumbled over as an affair of business, as a stupid boy repeats his talk, and frequently the college cant escapes from the preacher the moment after he has left the pulpit, and even whilst he is eating the dinner which he earned in such a dishonest manner.

Nothing, indeed, can be more irreverent than the cathedral service as it is now performed in this country, neither does it contain a set of weaker men than those who are the slaves of this childish routine. A disgusting skeleton of the former state is still exhibited; but all the solemnity that interested the imagination, if it did not purify the heart, is stripped off. The performance of high mass on the continent must impress every mind, where a spark of fancy glows, with that awful melancholy, that sublime tenderness, so near akin to devotion. I do not say that these devotional feelings are of more use, in a moral sense, than any other emotion of taste; but I contend that the theatrical pomp which gratifies our senses, is to be preferred to the cold parade that insults the understanding without reaching the heart.

Amongst remarks on national education, such observations cannot be misplaced, especially as the supporters of these establishments, degenerated into puerilities, affect to be the champions of religion.—Religion, pure source of comfort in this vale of tears! how has thy clear stream been muddied by the dabblers, who have presumptuously endeavoured to confine in one narrow channel, the living waters that ever flow towards God—the sublime ocean of existence! What would life be without that peace which the love of God, when built on humanity, alone can impart? Every earthly affection turns back, at intervals, to prey upon the heart that feeds it; and

the purest effusions of benevolence, often rudely damped by man, must mount as a free-will offering to Him who gave them birth, whose bright image they faintly reflect.

In public schools, however, religion, confounded with irksome ceremonies and unreasonable restraints, assumes the most ungracious aspect: not the sober austere one that commands respect whilst it inspires fear; but a ludicrous cast, that serves to point a pun. For, in fact, most of the good stories and smart things which enliven the spirits that have been concentrated at whist, are manufactured out of the incidents to which the very men labour to give a droll turn who countenance the abuse to live on the spoil.

There is not, perhaps, in the kingdom, a more dogmatical, or luxurious set of men, than the pedantic tyrants who reside in colleges and preside at public schools. The vacations are equally injurious to the morals of the masters and pupils, and the intercourse, which the former keep up with the nobility, introduces the same vanity and extravagance into their families, which banish domestic duties and comforts from the lordly mansion, whose state is awkwardly aped. The boys, who live at a great expence with the masters and assistants, are never domesticated, though placed there for that purpose; for, after a silent dinner, they swallow a hasty glass of wine, and retire to plan some mischievous trick, or to ridicule the person or manners of the very people they have just been cringing to, and whom they ought to consider as the representatives of their parents.

Can it then be a matter of surprise that boys become selfish and vicious who are thus shut out from social converse? or that a mitre often graces the brow of one of these diligent pastors?

The desire of living in the same style, as the rank just above them, infects each individual and every class of people, and meanness is the concomitant of this ignoble ambition; but those professions are most debasing whose ladder is patronage; yet, out of one of these professions the tutors of youth are, in general, chosen. But, can they be expected to inspire independent sentiments, whose conduct must be regulated by the cautious prudence that is ever on the watch for preferment?

So far, however, from thinking of the morals of boys, I have heard several masters of schools argue, that they only undertook to teach Latin and Greek; and that they had fulfilled their duty, by sending some good scholars to college.

A few good scholars, I grant, may have been formed by emulation and discipline; but, to bring forward these clever boys, the health and morals of a number have been sacrificed. The sons of our gentry and wealthy com-

moners are mostly educated at these seminaries, and will any one pretend to assert that the majority, making every allowance, come under the description of tolerable scholars?

It is not for the benefit of society that a few brilliant men should be brought forward at the expense of the multitude. It is true, that great men seem to start up, as great revolutions occur, at proper intervals, to restore order, and to blow aside the clouds that thicken over the face of truth; but let more reason and virtue prevail in society, and these strong winds would not be necessary. Public education, of every denomination, should be directed to form citizens; but if you wish to make good citizens, you must first exercise the affections of a son and a brother. This is the only way to expand the heart; for public affections, as well as public virtues, must ever grow out of the private character, or they are merely meteors that shoot athwart a dark sky, and disappear as they are gazed at and admired.

Few, I believe, have had much affection for mankind, who did not first love their parents, their brothers, sisters, and even the domestic brutes, whom they first played with. The exercise of youthful sympathies forms the moral temperature; and it is the recollection of these first affections and pursuits that gives life to those that are afterwards more under the direction of reason. In youth, the fondest friendships are formed, the genial juices mounting at the same time, kindly mix; or, rather the heart, tempered for the reception of friendship, is accustomed to seek for pleasure in something more noble than the churlish gratification of appetite.

In order then to inspire a love of home and domestic pleasures, children ought to be educated at home, for riotous holidays only make them fond of home for their own sakes. Yet, the vacations, which do not foster domestic affections, continually disturb the course of study, and render any plan of improvement abortive which includes temperance; still, were they abolished, children would be entirely separated from their parents, and I question whether they would become better citizens by sacrificing the preparatory affections, by destroying the force of relationships that render the marriage state as necessary as respectable. But, if a private education produce self-importance, or insulate a man in his family, the evil is only shifted, not remedied.

This train of reasoning brings me back to a subject, on which I mean to dwell, the necessity of establishing proper day-schools.

But, these should be national establishments, for whilst school-masters are dependent on the caprice of parents, little exertion can be expected from them, more than is necessary to please ignorant people. Indeed, the

necessity of a master's giving the parents some sample of the boys abilities, which during the vacation is shewn to every visitor,* is productive of more mischief than would at first be supposed. For it is seldom done entirely, to speak with moderation, by the child itself; thus the master countenances falsehood, or winds the poor machine up to some extraordinary exertion, that injures the wheels, and stops the progress of gradual improvement. The memory is loaded with unintelligible words, to make a shew of, without the understanding's acquiring any distinct ideas: but only that education deserves emphatically to be termed cultivation of mind, which teaches young people how to begin to think. The imagination should not be allowed to debauch the understanding before it gained strength, or vanity will become the forerunner of vice: for every way of exhibiting the acquirements of a child is injurious to its moral character.

How much time is lost in teaching them to recite what they do not understand? whilst, seated on benches, all in their best array, the mammas listen with astonishment to the parrot-like prattle, uttered in solemn cadences, with all the pomp of ignorance and folly. Such exhibitions only serve to strike the spreading fibres of vanity through the whole mind; for they neither teach children to speak fluently, nor behave gracefully. So far from it, that these frivolous pursuits might comprehensively be termed the study of affectation; for we now rarely see a simple, bashful boy, though few people of taste were ever disgusted by that awkward sheepishness so natural to the age, which schools and an early introduction into society, have changed into impudence and apish grimace.

Yet, how can these things be remedied whilst school-masters depend entirely on parents for a subsistence; and, when so many rival schools hang out their lures, to catch the attention of vain fathers and mothers, whose parental affection only leads them to wish that their children should outshine those of their neighbours?

Without great good luck, a sensible, conscientious man, would starve before he could raise a school, if he disdained to bubble weak parents by practising the secret tricks of the craft.

In the best regulated schools, however, where swarms are not crammed together, many bad habits must be acquired; but, at common schools, the body, heart, and understanding, are equally stunted, for parents are often only in quest of the cheapest school, and the master could not live, if he did not take a much greater number than he could manage himself; nor will the

*I now particularly allude to the numerous academies in and about London, and to the behaviour of the trading part of this great city.

scanty pittance, allowed for each child, permit him to hire ushers sufficient to assist in the discharge of the mechanical part of the business. Besides, whatever appearance the house and garden may make, the children do not enjoy the comfort of either, for they are continually reminded by irksome restrictions that they are not at home, and the state-rooms, garden, &c. must be kept in order for the recreation of the parents; who, of a Sunday, visit the school, and are impressed by the very parade that renders the situation of their children uncomfortable.

With what disgust have I heard sensible women, for girls are more restrained and cowed than boys, speak of the wearisome confinement, which they endured at school. Not allowed, perhaps, to step out of one broad walk in a superb garden, and obliged to pace with steady deportment stupidly backwards and forwards, holding up their heads and turning out their toes, with shoulders braced back, instead of bounding, as nature directs to complete her own design, in the various attitudes so conducive to health.* The pure animal spirits, which make both mind and body shoot out, and unfold the tender blossoms of hope, are turned sour, and vented in vain wishes or pert repinings, that contract the faculties and spoil the temper; else they mount to the brain, and sharpening the understanding before it gains proportionable strength, produce that pitiful cunning which disgracefully characterizes the female mind—and I fear will ever characterize it whilst women remain the slaves of power!

The little respect paid to chastity in the male world is, I am persuaded, the grand source of many of the physical and moral evils that torment mankind, as well as of the vices and follies that degrade and destroy women; yet at school, boys infallibly lose that decent bashfulness, which might have ripened into modesty, at home.

And what nasty indecent tricks do they not also learn from each other, when a number of them pig together in the same bedchamber, not to speak of the vices, which render the body weak, whilst they effectually prevent

*I remember a circumstance that once came under my own observation, and raised my indignation. I went to visit a little boy at a school where young children were prepared for a larger one. The master took me into the school-room, &c. but whilst I walked down a broad gravel walk, I could not help observing that the grass grew very luxuriantly on each side of me. I immediately asked the child some questions, and found that the poor boys were not allowed to stir off the walk, and that the master sometimes permitted sheep to be turned in to crop the untrodden grass. The tyrant of this domain used to sit by a window that overlooked the prison yard, and one nook turning from it, where the unfortunate babes could sport freely, he enclosed, and planted it with potatoes. The wife likewise was equally anxious to keep the children in order, lest they should dirty or tear their clothes.

the acquisition of any delicacy of mind. The little attention paid to the cultivation of modesty, amongst men, produces great depravity in all the relationships of society; for, not only love—love that ought to purify the heart, and first call forth all the youthful powers, to prepare the man to discharge the benevolent duties of life, is sacrificed to premature lust; but, all the social affections are deadened by the selfish gratifications, which very early pollute the mind, and dry up the generous juices of the heart. In what an unnatural manner is innocence often violated; and what serious consequences ensue to render private vices a public pest. Besides, an habit of personal order, which has more effect on the moral character, than is, in general, supposed, can only be acquired at home, where that respectable reserve is kept up which checks the familiarity, that sinking into beastliness, undermines the affection it insults.

I have already animadverted on the bad habits which females acquire when they are shut up together; and, I think, that the observation may fairly be extended to the other sex, till the natural inference is drawn which I have had in view throughout—that to improve both sexes they ought, not only in private families, but in public schools, to be educated together. If marriage be the cement of society, mankind should all be educated after the same model, or the intercourse of the sexes will never deserve the name of fellowship, nor will women ever fulfil the peculiar duties of their sex, till they become enlightened citizens, till they become free by being enabled to earn their own subsistence, independent of men; in the same manner, I mean, to prevent misconstruction, as one man is independent of another. Nay, marriage will never be held sacred till women, by being brought up with men, are prepared to be their companions rather than their mistresses; for the mean doublings of cunning will ever render them contemptible, whilst oppression renders them timid. So convinced am I of this truth, that I will venture to predict that virtue will never prevail in society till the virtues of both sexes are founded on reason; and, till the affections common to both are allowed to gain their due strength by the discharge of mutual duties.

Were boys and girls permitted to pursue the same studies together, those graceful decencies might early be inculcated which produce modesty without those sexual distinctions that taint the mind. Lessons of politeness, and that formulary of decorum, which treads on the heels of falsehood, would be rendered useless by habitual propriety of behaviour. Not, indeed, put on for visitors like the courtly robe of politeness, but the sober effect of cleanliness of mind. Would not this simple elegance of sincerity be a chaste homage paid to domestic affections, far surpassing the meretri-

cious compliments that shine with false lustre in the heartless intercourse of fashionable life? But, till more understanding preponderates in society, there will ever be a want of heart and taste, and the harlot's *rouge* will supply the place of that celestial suffusion which only virtuous affections can give to the face. Gallantry, and what is called love, may subsist without simplicity of character; but the main pillars of friendship, are respect and confidence—esteem is never founded on it cannot tell what!

A taste for the fine arts requires great cultivation; but not more than a taste for the virtuous affections; and both suppose that enlargement of mind which opens so many sources of mental pleasure. Why do people hurry to noisy scenes, and crowded circles? I should answer, because they want activity of mind, because they have not cherished the virtues of the heart. They only, therefore, see and feel in the gross, and continually pine after variety, finding every thing that is simple insipid.

This argument may be carried further than philosophers are aware of, for if nature destined woman, in particular, for the discharge of domestic duties, she made her susceptible of the attached affections in a great degree. Now women are notoriously fond of pleasure; and, naturally must be so according to my definition, because they cannot enter into the minutiae of domestic taste; lacking judgment, the foundation of all taste. For the understanding, in spite of sensual cavillers, reserves to itself the privilege of conveying pure joy to the heart.

With what a languid yawn have I seen an admirable poem thrown down, that a man of true taste returns to, again and again with rapture; and, whilst melody has almost suspended respiration, a lady has asked me where I bought my gown. I have seen also an eye glanced coldly over a most exquisite picture, rest, sparkling with pleasure, on a caricature rudely sketched; and whilst some terrific feature in nature has spread sublime stillness through my soul, I have been desired to observe the pretty tricks of a lap-dog, that my perverse fate forced me to travel with. Is it surprising that such a tasteless being should rather caress this dog than her children? Or, that she should prefer the rant of flattery to the simple accents of sincerity?

To illustrate this remark I must be allowed to observe, that men of the first genius, and most cultivated minds, have appeared to have the highest relish for the simple beauties of nature; and they must have forcibly felt, what they have so well described, the charm which natural affections, and unsophisticated feelings spread round the human character. It is this power of looking into the heart, and responsively vibrating with each emotion, that enables the poet to personify each passion, and the painter to sketch with a pencil of fire.

True taste is ever the work of the understanding employed in observing natural effects; and till women have more understanding, it is vain to expect them to possess domestic taste. Their lively senses will ever be at work to harden their hearts, and the emotions struck out of them will continue to be vivid and transitory, unless a proper education store their mind with knowledge.

It is the want of domestic taste, and not the acquirement of knowledge, that takes women out of their families, and tears the smiling babe from the breast that ought to afford it nourishment. Women have been allowed to remain in ignorance, and slavish dependence, many, very many years, and still we hear of nothing but their fondness of pleasure and sway, their preference of rakes and soldiers, their childish attachment to toys, and the vanity that makes them value accomplishments more than virtues.

History brings forward a fearful catalogue of the crimes which their cunning has produced, when the weak slaves have had sufficient address to over-reach their masters. In France, and in how many other countries, have men been the luxurious despots, and women the crafty ministers?—Does this prove that ignorance and dependence domesticate them? Is not their folly the by-word of the libertines, who relax in their society; and do not men of sense continually lament that an immoderate fondness for dress and dissipation carries the mother of a family for ever from home? Their hearts have not been debauched by knowledge, or their minds led astray by scientific pursuits; yet, they do not fulfil the peculiar duties which as women they are called upon by nature to fulfil. On the contrary, the state of warfare which subsists between the sexes, makes them employ those wiles, that often frustrate the more open designs of force.

When, therefore, I call women slaves, I mean in a political and civil sense; for, indirectly they obtain too much power, and are debased by their exertions to obtain illicit sway.

Let an enlightened nation* then try what effect reason would have to bring them back to nature, and their duty; and allowing them to share the advantages of education and government with man, see whether they will become better, as they grow wiser and become free. They cannot be injured by the experiment; for it is not in the power of man to render them more insignificant than they are at present.

To render this practicable, day schools, for particular ages, should be established by government, in which boys and girls might be educated together. The school for the younger children, from five to nine years of age,

*France

ought to be absolutely free and open to all classes.* A sufficient number of masters should also be chosen by a select committee, in each parish, to whom any complaint of negligence, &c. might be made, if signed by six of the children's parents.

Ushers would then be unnecessary; for I believe experience will ever prove that this kind of subordinate authority is particularly injurious to the morals of youth. What, indeed, can tend to deprave the character more than outward submission and inward contempt? Yet how can boys be expected to treat an usher with respect, when the master seems to consider him in the light of a servant, and almost to countenance the ridicule which becomes the chief amusement of the boys during the play hours?

But nothing of this kind could occur in an elementary day-school, where boys and girls, the rich and poor, should meet together. And to prevent any of the distinctions of vanity, they should be dressed alike, and all obliged to submit to the same discipline, or leave the school. The school-room ought to be surrounded by a large piece of ground, in which the children might be usefully exercised, for at this age they should not be confined to any sedentary employment for more than an hour at a time. But these relaxations might all be rendered a part of elementary education, for many things improve and amuse the senses, when introduced as a kind of show, to the principles of which, dryly laid down, children would turn a deaf ear. For instance, botany, mechanics, and astronomy. Reading, writing, arithmetic, natural history, and some simple experiments in natural philosophy, might fill up the day; but these pursuits should never encroach on gymnastic plays in the open air. The elements of religion, history, the history of man, and politics, might also be taught by conversations, in the socratic form.

After the age of nine, girls and boys, intended for domestic employments, or mechanical trades, ought to be removed to other schools, and receive instruction, in some measure appropriated to the destination of each individual, the two sexes being still together in the morning; but in the afternoon, the girls should attend a school, where plain-work, mantua-making, millinery, &c. would be their employment.

The young people of superior abilities, or fortune, might now be taught, in another school, the dead and living languages, the elements of science, and continue the study of history and politics, on a more extensive scale, which would not exclude polite literature.

*Treating this part of the subject, I have borrowed some hints from a very sensible pamphlet, written by the late bishop of Autun on Public Education.

Girls and boys still together? I hear some readers ask: yes. And I should not fear any other consequence than that some early attachment might take place; which, whilst it had the best effect on the moral character of the young people, might not perfectly agree with the views of the parents, for it will be a long time, I fear, before the world will be so far enlightened that parents, only anxious to render their children virtuous, shall allow them to choose companions for life themselves.

Besides, this would be a sure way to promote early marriages, and from early marriages the most salutary physical and moral effects naturally flow. What a different character does a married citizen assume from the selfish coxcomb, who lives, but for himself, and who is often afraid to marry lest he should not be able to live in a certain style. Great emergencies excepted, which would rarely occur in a society of which equality was the basis, a man can only be prepared to discharge the duties of public life, by the habitual practice of those inferiour ones which form the man.

In this plan of education the constitution of boys would not be ruined by the early debaucheries, which now make men so selfish, or girls rendered weak and vain, by indolence, and frivolous pursuits. But, I presuppose, that such a degree of equality should be established between the sexes as would shut out gallantry and coquetry, yet allow friendship and love to temper the heart for the discharge of higher duties.

These would be schools of morality—and the happiness of man, allowed to flow from the pure springs of duty and affection, what advances might not the human mind make? Society can only be happy and free in proportion as it is virtuous; but the present distinctions, established in society, corrode all private, and blast all public virtue.

I have already inveighed against the custom of confining girls to their needle, and shutting them out from all political and civil employments; for by thus narrowing their minds they are rendered unfit to fulfil the peculiar duties which nature has assigned them.

Only employed about the little incidents of the day, they necessarily grow up cunning. My very soul has often sickened at observing the sly tricks practised by women to gain some foolish thing on which their silly hearts were set. Not allowed to dispose of money, or call any thing their own, they learn to turn the market penny; or, should a husband offend, by staying from home, or give rise to some emotions of jealousy—a new gown, or any pretty bawble, smooths Juno's angry brow.

But these *littlenesses* would not degrade their character, if women were led to respect themselves, if political and moral subjects were opened to them; and, I will venture to affirm, that this is the only way to make them

properly attentive to their domestic duties.—An active mind embraces the whole circle of its duties, and finds time enough for all. It is not, I assert, a bold attempt to emulate masculine virtues; it is not the enchantment of literary pursuits, or the steady investigation of scientific subjects, that leads women astray from duty. No, it is indolence and vanity—the love of pleasure and the love of sway, that will reign paramount in an empty mind. I say empty emphatically, because the education which women now receive scarcely deserves the name. For the little knowledge that they are led to acquire, during the important years of youth, is merely relative to accomplishments; and accomplishments without a bottom, for unless the understanding be cultivated, superficial and monotonous is every grace. Like the charms of a made up face, they only strike the senses in a crowd; but at home, wanting mind, they want variety. The consequence is obvious; in gay scenes of dissipation we meet the artificial mind and face, for those who fly from solitude dread, next to solitude, the domestic circle; not having it in their power to amuse or interest, they feel their own insignificance, or find nothing to amuse or interest themselves.

Besides, what can be more indelicate than a girl's *coming out* in the fashionable world? Which, in other words, is to bring to market a marriageable miss, whose person is taken from one public place to another, richly caparisoned. Yet, mixing in the giddy circle under restraint, these butterflies long to flutter at large, for the first affection of their souls is their own persons, to which their attention has been called with the most sedulous care whilst they were preparing for the period that decides their fate for life. Instead of pursuing this idle routine, sighing for tasteless shew, and heartless state, with what dignity would the youths of both sexes form attachments in the schools that I have cursorily pointed out; in which, as life advanced, dancing, music, and drawing, might be admitted as relaxations, for at these schools young people of fortune ought to remain, more or less, till they were of age. Those, who were designed for particular professions, might attend, three or four mornings in the week, the schools appropriated for their immediate instruction.

I only drop these observations at present, as hints; rather, indeed, as an outline of the plan I mean, than a digested one; but I must add, that I highly approve of one regulation mentioned in the pamphlet* already alluded to, that of making the children and youths independent of the masters respecting punishments. They should be tried by their peers, which would be an admirable method of fixing sound principles of justice in the mind, and

*The Bishop of Autun's.

might have the happiest effect on the temper, which is very early soured or irritated by tyranny, till it becomes peevishly cunning, or ferociously overbearing.

My imagination darts forward with benevolent fervour to greet these amiable and respectable groups, in spite of the sneering of cold hearts, who are at liberty to utter, with frigid self-importance, the damning epithet—romantic; the force of which I shall endeavour to blunt by repeating the words of an eloquent moralist.—“I know not whether the allusions of a truly humane heart, whose zeal renders every thing easy, be not preferable to that rough and repulsing reason, which always finds an indifference for the public good, the first obstacle to whatever would promote it.”

I know that libertines will also exclaim, that woman would be unsexed by acquiring strength of body and mind, and that beauty, soft bewitching beauty! would no longer adorn the daughters of men. I am of a very different opinion, for I think that, on the contrary, we should then see dignified beauty, and true grace; to produce which, many powerful physical and moral causes would concur.—Not relaxed beauty, it is true, or the graces of helplessness; but such as appears to make us respect the human body as a majestic pile fit to receive a noble inhabitant, in the relics of antiquity.

I do not forget the popular opinion that the Grecian statues were not modelled after nature. I mean, not according to the proportions of a particular man; but that beautiful limbs and features were selected from various bodies to form an harmonious whole. This might, in some degree, be true. The fine ideal picture of an exalted imagination might be superiour to the materials which the statuary found in nature, and thus it might with propriety be termed rather the model of mankind than of a man. It was not, however, the mechanical selection of limbs and features; but the ebullition of an heated fancy that burst forth, and the fine senses and enlarged understanding of the artist selected the solid matter, which he drew into this glowing focus.

I observed that it was not mechanical, because a whole was produced—a model of that grand simplicity, of those concurring energies, which arrest our attention and command our reverence. For only insipid lifeless beauty is produced by a servile copy of even beautiful nature. Yet, independent of these observations, I believe that the human form must have been far more beautiful than it is at present, because extreme indolence, barbarous ligatures, and many causes, which forcibly act on it, in our luxurious state of society, did not retard its expansion, or render it deformed. Exercise and cleanliness appear to be not only the surest means of preserving health,

but of promoting beauty, the physical causes only considered; yet, this is not sufficient, moral ones must concur, or beauty will be merely of that rustic kind which blooms on the innocent, wholesome, countenances of some country people, whose minds have not been exercised. To render the person perfect, physical and moral beauty ought to be attained at the same time; each lending and receiving force by the combination. Judgment must reside on the brow, affection and fancy beam in the eye, and humanity curve the cheek, or vain is the sparkling of the finest eye or the elegantly turned finish of the fairest features: whilst in every motion that displays the active limbs and well-knit joints, grace and modesty should appear. But this fair assemblage is not to be brought together by chance; it is the reward of exertions calculated to support each other; for judgment can only be acquired by reflection, affection by the discharge of duties, and humanity by the exercise of compassion to every living creature.

Humanity to animals should be particularly inculcated as a part of national education, for it is not at present one of our national virtues. Tenderness for their humble dumb domestics, amongst the lower class, is oftener to be found in a savage than a civilized state. For civilization prevents that intercourse which creates affection in the rude hut, or mud hovel, and leads uncultivated minds who are only depraved by the refinements which prevail in the society, where they are trodden under foot by the rich, to domineer over them to revenge the insults that they are obliged to bear from their superiours.

This habitual cruelty is first caught at school, where it is one of the rare sports of the boys to torment the miserable brutes that fall in their way. The transition, as they grow up, from barbarity to brutes to domestic tyranny over wives, children, and servants, is very easy. Justice, or even benevolence, will not be a powerful spring of action unless it extend to the whole creation; nay, I believe that it may be delivered as an axiom, that those who can see pain, unmoved, will soon learn to inflict it.

The vulgar are swayed by present feelings, and the habits which they have accidentally acquired; but on partial feelings much dependence cannot be placed, though they be just; for, when they are not invigorated by reflection, custom weakens them, till they are scarcely perceptible. The sympathies of our nature are strengthened by pondering cogitations, and deadened by thoughtless use. Macbeth's heart smote him more for one murder, the first, than for a hundred subsequent ones, which were necessary to back it. But, when I used the epithet vulgar, I did not mean to confine my remark to the poor, for partial humanity, sounded on present sensations, or whim, is quite as conspicuous, if not more so, amongst the rich.

The lady who sheds tears for the bird starved in a snare, and execrates the devils in the shape of men, who goad to madness the poor ox, or whip the patient ass, tottering under a burden above its strength, will, nevertheless, keep her coachman and horses whole hours waiting for her, when the sharp frost bites, or the rain beats against the well-closed windows which do not admit a breath of air to tell her how roughly the wind blows without. And she who takes her dogs to bed, and nurses them with a parade of sensibility, when sick, will suffer her babes to grow up crooked in a nursery. This illustration of my argument is drawn from a matter of fact. The woman whom I allude to was handsome, reckoned very handsome, by those who do not miss the mind when the face is plump and fair; but her understanding had not been led from female duties by literature, nor her innocence debauched by knowledge. No, she was quite feminine, according to the masculine acceptance of the word; and, so far from loving these spoiled brutes that filled the place which her children ought to have occupied, she only lisped out a pretty mixture of French and English nonsense, to please the men who flocked round her. The wife, mother, and human creature, were all swallowed up by the factitious character which an improper education and the selfish vanity of beauty had produced.

I do not like to make a distinction without a difference, and I own that I have been as much disgusted by the fine lady who took her lap-dog to her bosom instead of her child; as by the ferocity of a man, who, beating his horse, declared, that he knew as well when he did wrong, as a Christian.

This brood of folly shews how mistaken they are who, if they allow women to leave their harems, do not cultivate their understandings, in order to plant virtues in their hearts. For had they sense, they might acquire that domestic taste which would lead them to love with reasonable subordination their whole family, from their husband to the house-dog; nor would they ever insult humanity in the person of the most menial servant by paying more attention to the comfort of a brute, than to that of a fellow-creature.

My observations on national education are obviously hints; but I principally wish to enforce the necessity of educating the sexes together to perfect both, and of making children sleep at home that they may learn to love home; yet to make private support, instead of smothering, public affections, they should be sent to school to mix with a number of equals, for only by the jostlings of equality can we form a just opinion of ourselves.

To render mankind more virtuous, and happier of course, both sexes must act from the same principle; but how can that be expected when only

one is allowed to see the reasonableness of it? To render also the social compact truly equitable, and in order to spread those enlightening principles, which alone can meliorate the fate of man, women must be allowed to found their virtue on knowledge, which is scarcely possible unless they be educated by the same pursuits as men. For they are now made so inferiour by ignorance and low desires, as not to deserve to be ranked with them; or, by the serpentine wriggings of cunning they mount the tree of knowledge, and only acquire sufficient to lead men astray.

It is plain from the history of all nations, that women cannot be confined to merely domestic pursuits, for they will not fulfil family duties, unless their minds take a wider range, and whilst they are kept in ignorance they become in the same proportion the slaves of pleasure as they are the slaves of man. Nor can they be shut out of great enterprises, though the narrowness of their minds often make them mar, what they are unable to comprehend.

The libertinism, and even the virtues of superiour men, will always give women, of some description, great power over them; and these weak women, under the influence of childish passions and selfish vanity, will throw a false light over the objects which the very men view with their eyes, who ought to enlighten their judgment. Men of fancy, and those sanguine characters who mostly hold the helm of human affairs, in general, relax in the society of women; and surely I need not cite to the most superficial reader of history the numerous examples of vice and oppression which the private intrigues of female favourites have produced; not to dwell on the mischief that naturally arises from the blundering interposition of well-meaning folly. For in the transactions of business it is much better to have to deal with a knave than a fool, because a knave adheres to some plan; and any plan of reason may be seen through much sooner than sudden flight of folly. The power which vile and foolish women have had over wise men, who possessed sensibility, is notorious; I shall only mention one instance.

Who ever drew a more exalted female character than Rousseau? though in the lump he constantly endeavoured to degrade the sex. And why was he thus anxious? Truly to justify to himself the affection which weakness and virtue had made him cherish for that fool Theresa. He could not raise her to the common level of her sex; and therefore he laboured to bring woman down to hers. He found her a convenient humble companion, and pride made him determine to find some superiour virtues in the being whom he chose to live with; but did not her conduct during his life, and after his death, clearly shew how grossly he was mistaken who called her

a celestial innocent. Nay, in the bitterness of his heart, he himself laments, that when his bodily infirmities made him no longer treat her like a woman, she ceased to have an affection for him. And it was very natural that she should, for having so few sentiments in common, when the sexual tie was broken, what was to hold her? To hold her affection whose sensibility was confined to one sex, nay, to one man, it requires sense to turn sensibility into the broad channel of humanity; many women have not mind enough to have an affection for a woman, or a friendship for a man. But the sexual weakness that makes woman depend on man for a subsistence, produces a kind of cattish affection which leads a wife to purr about her husband as she would about any man who fed and caressed her.

Men are, however, often gratified by this kind of fondness, which is confined in a beastly manner to themselves; but should they ever become more virtuous, they will wish to converse at their fire-side with a friend, after they cease to play with a mistress.

Besides, understanding is necessary to give variety and interest to sensual enjoyments, for low, indeed, in the intellectual scale, is the mind that can continue to love when neither virtue nor sense give a human appearance to an animal appetite. But sense will always preponderate; and if women be not, in general, brought more on a level with men, some superiour women, like the Greek courtezans, will assemble the men of abilities around them, and draw from their families many citizens, who would have stayed at home had their wives had more sense, or the graces which result from the exercise of the understanding and fancy, the legitimate parents of taste. A woman of talents, if she be not absolutely ugly, will always obtain great power, raised by the weakness of her sex; and in proportion as men acquire virtue and delicacy, by the exertion of reason, they will look for both in women, but they can only acquire them in the same way that men do.

In France or Italy, have the women confined themselves to domestic life? though they have not hitherto had a political existence, yet, have they not illicitly had great sway? corrupting themselves and the men with whose passions they played. In short, in whatever light I view the subject, reason and experience convince me that the only method of leading women to fulfil their peculiar duties, is to free them from all restraint by allowing them to participate in the inherent rights of mankind.

Make them free, and they will quickly become wise and virtuous, as men become more so; for the improvement must be mutual, or the injustice which one half of the human race are obliged to submit to, retorting on their oppressors, the virtue of man will be worm-eaten by the insect whom he keeps under his feet.

Let men take their choice, man and woman were made for each other, though not to become one being; and if they will not improve women, they will deprave them!

I speak of the improvement and emancipation of the whole sex, for I know that the behaviour of a few women, who, by accident, or following a strong bent of nature, have acquired a portion of knowledge superiour to that of the rest of their sex, has often been overbearing; but there have been instances of women who, attaining knowledge, have not discarded modesty, nor have they always pedantically appeared to despise the ignorance which they laboured to disperse in their own minds. The exclamations then which any advice respecting female learning, commonly produces, especially from pretty women, often arise from envy. When they chance to see that even the lustre of their eyes, and the flippant sportiveness of refined coquetry will not always secure them attention, during a whole evening, should a woman of a more cultivated understanding endeavour to give a rational turn to the conversation, the common source of consolation is, that such women seldom get husbands. What arts have I not seen silly women use to interrupt by *flirtation*, a very significant word to describe such a manœuvre, a rational conversation which made the men forget that they were pretty women.

But, allowing what is very natural to man, that the possession of rare abilities is really calculated to excite over-weening pride, disgusting in both men and women—in what a state of inferiority must the female faculties have rusted when such a small portion of knowledge as those women attained, who have sneeringly been termed learned women, could be singular?—Sufficiently so to puff up the possessor, and excite envy in her contemporaries, and some of the other sex. Nay, has not a little rationality exposed many women to the severest censure? I advert to well known facts, for I have frequently heard women ridiculed, and every little weakness exposed, only because they adopted the advice of some medical men, and deviated from the beaten track in their mode of treating their infants. I have actually heard this barbarous aversion to innovation carried still further, and a sensible woman stigmatized as an unnatural mother, who has thus been wisely solicitous to preserve the health of her children, when in the midst of her care she has lost one by some of the casualties of infancy, which no prudence can ward off. Her acquaintance have observed, that this was the consequence of new-fangled notions—the new-fangled notions of ease and cleanliness. And those who pretending to experience, though they have long adhered to prejudices that have, according to the opinion of the most sagacious physicians, thinned the

human race, almost rejoiced at the disaster that gave a kind of sanction to prescription.

Indeed, if it were only on this account, the national education of women is of the utmost consequence, for what a number of human sacrifices are made to that moloch prejudice! And in how many ways are children destroyed by the lasciviousness of man? The want of natural affection, in many women, who are drawn from their duty by the admiration of men, and the ignorance of others, render the infancy of man a much more perilous state than that of brutes; yet men are unwilling to place women in situations proper to enable them to acquire sufficient understanding to know how even to nurse their babes.

So forcibly does this truth strike me, that I would rest the whole tendency of my reasoning upon it, for whatever tends to incapacitate the maternal character, takes woman out of her sphere.

But it is vain to expect the present race of weak mothers either to take that reasonable care of a child's body, which is necessary to lay the foundation of a good constitution, supposing that it do not suffer for the sins of its fathers; or, to manage its temper so judiciously that the child will not have, as it grows up, to throw off all that its mother, its first instructor, directly or indirectly taught; and unless the mind have uncommon vigour, womanish follies will stick to the character throughout life. The weakness of the mother will be visited on the children! And whilst women are educated to rely on their husbands for judgment, this must ever be the consequence, for there is no improving an understanding by halves, nor can any being act wisely from imitation, because in every circumstance of life there is a kind of individuality, which requires an exertion of judgment to modify general rules. The being who can think justly in one track, will soon extend its intellectual empire; and she who has sufficient judgment to manage her children, will not submit, right or wrong, to her husband, or patiently to the social laws which make a nonentity of a wife.

In public schools women, to guard against the errors of ignorance, should be taught the elements of anatomy and medicine, not only to enable them to take proper care of their own health, but to make them rational nurses of their infants, parents, and husbands; for the bills of mortality are swelled by the blunders of self-willed old women, who give nostrums of their own without knowing any thing of the human frame. It is likewise proper only in a domestic view, to make women acquainted with the anatomy of the mind, by allowing the sexes to associate together in every pursuit; and by leading them to observe the progress of the human under-

standing in the improvement of the sciences and arts; never forgetting the science of morality, or the study of the political history of mankind.

A man has been termed a microcosm; and every family might also be called a state. States, it is true, have mostly been governed by arts that disgrace the character of man; and the want of a just constitution, and equal laws, have so perplexed the notions of the worldly wise, that they more than question the reasonableness of contending for the rights of humanity. Thus morality, polluted in the national reservoir, sends off streams of vice to corrupt the constituent parts of the body politic; but should more noble, or rather, more just principles regulate the laws, which ought to be the government of society, and not those who execute them, duty might become the rule of private conduct.

Besides, by the exercise of their bodies and minds women would acquire that mental activity so necessary in the maternal character, united with the fortitude that distinguishes steadiness of conduct from the obstinate perverseness of weakness. For it is dangerous to advise the indolent to be steady, because they instantly become rigorous, and to save themselves trouble, punish with severity faults that the patient fortitude of reason might have prevented.

But fortitude presupposes strength of mind; and is strength of mind to be acquired by indolent acquiescence? by asking advice instead of exerting the judgment? by obeying through fear, instead of practising the forbearance, which we all stand in need of ourselves?—The conclusion which I wish to draw, is obvious; make women rational creatures, and free citizens, and they will quickly become good wives, and mothers; that is—if men do not neglect the duties of husbands and fathers.

Discussing the advantages which a public and private education combined, as I have sketched, might rationally be expected to produce, I have dwelt most on such as are particularly relative to the female world, because I think the female world oppressed; yet the gangrene, which the vices engendered by oppression have produced, is not confined to the morbid part, but pervades society at large: so that when I wish to see my sex become more like moral agents, my heart bounds with the anticipation of the general diffusion of that sublime contentment which only morality can diffuse.

CHAP. XIII.

SOME INSTANCES OF THE FOLLY
WHICH THE IGNORANCE OF WOMEN
GENERATES; WITH CONCLUDING
REFLECTIONS ON THE MORAL
IMPROVEMENT THAT A REVOLUTION
IN FEMALE MANNERS MIGHT
NATURALLY BE EXPECTED
TO PRODUCE.

There are many follies, in some degree, peculiar to women: sins against reason of commission as well as of omission; but all flowing from ignorance or prejudice, I shall only point out such as appear to be particularly injurious to their moral character. And in animadverting on them, I wish especially to prove, that the weakness of mind and body, which men have endeavoured, impelled by various motives, to perpetuate, prevents their discharging the peculiar duty of their sex: for when weakness of body will not permit them to suckle their children, and weakness of mind makes them spoil their tempers—is woman in a natural state?

SECT. I.

One glaring instance of the weakness which proceeds from ignorance, first claims attention, and calls for severe reproof.

In this metropolis a number of lurking leeches infamously gain a subsistence by practising on the credulity of women, pretending to cast nativities, to use the technical phrase; and many females who, proud of their rank and fortune, look down on the vulgar with sovereign contempt, shew by this credulity, that the distinction is arbitrary, and that they have not sufficiently cultivated their minds to rise above vulgar prejudices. Women, because they have not been led to consider the knowledge of their duty as the one thing necessary to know, or, to live in the present moment by the discharge of it, are very anxious to peep into futurity, to learn what they have to expect to render life interesting, and to break the vacuum of ignorance.

I must be allowed to expostulate seriously with the ladies who follow these idle inventions; for ladies, mistresses of families, are not ashamed to drive in their own carriages to the door of the cunning man.* And if any of them should peruse this work, I entreat them to answer to their own hearts the following questions, not forgetting that they are in the presence of God.

Do you believe that there is but one God, and that he is powerful, wise, and good?

Do you believe that all things were created by him, and that all beings are dependent on him?

Do you rely on his wisdom, so conspicuous in his works, and in your own frame, and are you convinced that he has ordered all things which do not come under the cognizance of your senses, in the same perfect harmony, to fulfil his designs?

Do you acknowledge that the power of looking into futurity, and seeing things that are not, as if they were, is an attribute of the Creator? And should he, by an impression on the minds of his creatures, think fit to impart to them some event hid in the shades of time yet unborn, to whom would the secret be revealed by immediate inspiration? The opinion of ages will answer this question—to reverend old men, to people distinguished for eminent piety.

*I once lived in the neighbourhood of one of these men, a *handsome* man, and saw with surprise and indignation, women, whose appearance and attendance bespoke that rank in which females are supposed to receive a superiour education, flock to his door.

The oracles of old were thus delivered by priests dedicated to the service of the God who was supposed to inspire them. The glare of worldly pomp which surrounded these impostors, and the respect paid to them by artful politicians, who knew how to avail themselves of this useful engine to bend the necks of the strong under the dominion of the cunning, spread a sacred mysterious veil of sanctity over their lies and abominations. Impressed by such solemn devotional parade, a Greek, or Roman lady might be excused, if she inquired of the oracle, when she was anxious to pry into futurity, or inquire about some dubious event: and her inquiries, however contrary to reason, could not be reckoned impious. —But, can the professors of Christianity ward off that imputation? Can a Christian suppose that the favourites of the most High, the highly favoured, would be obliged to lurk in disguise, and practise the most dishonest tricks to cheat silly women out of the money—which the poor cry for in vain?

Say not that such questions are an insult to common sense—for it is your own conduct, O ye foolish women! which throws an odium on your sex! And these reflections should make you shudder at your thoughtlessness, and irrational devotion.—For I do not suppose that all of you laid aside your religion, such as it is, when you entered those mysterious dwellings. Yet, as I have throughout supposed myself talking to ignorant women, for ignorant ye are in the most emphatical sense of the word, it would be absurd to reason with you on the egregious folly of desiring to know what the Supreme Wisdom has concealed.

Probably you would not understand me, were I to attempt to shew you that it would be absolutely inconsistent with the grand purpose of life, that of rendering human creatures wise and virtuous: and that, were it sanctioned by God, it would disturb the order established in creation; and if it be not sanctioned by God, do you expect to hear truth? Can events be foretold, events which have not yet assumed a body to become subject to mortal inspection, can they be foreseen by a vicious worldling, who pampers his appetites by preying on the foolish ones?

Perhaps, however, you devoutly believe in the devil, and imagine, to shift the question, that he may assist his votaries; but, if really respecting the power of such a being, an enemy to goodness and to God, can you go to church after having been under such an obligation to him?

From these delusions to those still more fashionable deceptions, practised by the whole tribe of magnetisers, the transition is very natural. With respect to them, it is equally proper to ask women a few questions.

Do you know any thing of the construction of the human frame? If not, it is proper that you should be told what every child ought to know,

that when its admirable œconomy has been disturbed by intemperance or indolence, I speak not of violent disorders, but of chonical diseases, it must be brought into a healthy state again, by slow degrees, and if the functions of life have not been materially injured, regimen, another word for temperance, air, exercise, and a few medicines, prescribed by persons who have studied the human body, are the only human means, yet discovered, of recovering that inestimable blessing health, that will bear investigation.

Do you then believe that these magnetisers, who, by hocus pocus tricks, pretend to work a miracle, are delegated by God, or assisted by the solver of all these kind of difficulties—the devil?

Do they, when they put to flight, as it is said, disorders that have baffled the powers of medicine, work in conformity to the light of reason? or, do they effect these wonderful cures by supernatural aid?

By a communication, an adept may answer, with the world of sprits. A noble privilege, it must be allowed. Some of the ancients mention familiar dæmons, who guarded them from danger by kindly intimating, we cannot guess in what manner, when any danger was nigh; or, pointed out what they ought to undertake. Yet the men who laid claim to this privilege, out of the order of nature, insisted that it was the reward, or consequence, of superiour temperance and piety. But the present workers of wonders are not raised above their fellows by superiour temperance or sanctity. They do not cure for the love of God, but money. These are the priests of quackery, though it is true they have not the convenient expedient of selling masses for souls in purgatory, or churches where they can display crutches, and models of limbs made sound by a touch or a word.

I am not conversant with the technical terms, or initiated into the arcana, therefore, I may speak improperly; but it is clear that men who will not conform to the law of reason, and earn a subsistence in an honest way, by degrees, are very fortunate in becoming acquainted with such obliging spirits. We cannot, indeed, give them credit for either great sagacity or goodness, else they would have chosen more noble instruments, when they wished to shew themselves the benevolent friends of man.

It is, however, little short of blasphemy to pretend to such powers!

From the whole tenour of the dispensations of Providence, it appears evident to sober reason, that certain vices produce certain effects; and can any one so grossly insult the wisdom of God, as to suppose that a miracle will be allowed to disturb his general laws, to restore to health the intemperate and vicious, merely to enable them to pursue the same course with impunity? Be whole, and sin no more, said Jesus. And, are greater miracles

to be performed by those who do not follow his footsteps, who healed the body to reach the mind?

The mentioning of the name of Christ, after such vile impostors, may displease some of my readers—I respect their warmth; but let them not forget that the followers of these delusions bear his name, and profess to be the disciples of him, who said, by their works we should know who were the children of God or the servants of sin. I allow that it is easier to touch the body of a saint, or to be magnetised, than to restrain our appetites or govern our passions; but health of body or mind can only be recovered by these means, or we make the Supreme Judge partial and revengeful.

Is he a man that he should change, or punish out of resentment? He—the common father, wounds but to heal, says reason, and our irregularities producing certain consequences, we are forcibly shewn the nature of vice; that thus learning to know good from evil, by experience, we may hate one and love the other, in proportion to the wisdom which we attain. The poison contains the antidote; and we either reform our evil habits and cease to sin against our own bodies, to use the forcible language of scripture, or a premature death, the punishment of sin, snaps the thread of life.

Here an awful stop is put to our inquiries.—But, why should I conceal my sentiments? Considering the attributes of God, I believe that whatever punishment may follow, will tend, like the anguish of disease, to shew the malignity of vice, for the purpose of reformation. Positive punishment appears so contrary to the nature of God, discoverable in all his works, and in our own reason, that I could sooner believe that the Deity paid no attention to the conduct of men, than that he punished without the benevolent design of reforming.

To suppose only that an all-wise and powerful Being, as good as he is great, should create a being foreseeing, that after fifty or sixty years of feverish existence, it would be plunged into never ending woe—is blasphemy. On what will the worm feed that is never to die? On folly, on ignorance, say ye—I should blush indignantly at drawing the natural conclusion could I insert it, and wish to withdraw myself from the wing of my God! On such a supposition, I speak with reverence, he would be a consuming fire. We should wish, though vainly, to fly from his presence when fear absorbed love, and darkness involved all his counsels!

I know that many devout people boast of submitting to the Will of God blindly, as to an arbitrary sceptre or rod, on the same principle as the Indians worship the devil. In other words, like people in the common concerns of life, they do homage to power, and cringe under the foot that can crush

them. Rational religion, on the contrary, is a submission to the will of a being so perfectly wise, that all he wills must be directed by the proper motive—must be reasonable.

And, if thus we respect God, can we give credit to the mysterious insinuations, which insult his laws? can we believe, though it should stare us in the face, that he would work a miracle to authorize confusion by sanctioning an error? Yet we must either allow these impious conclusions, or treat with contempt every promise to restore health to a diseased body by supernatural means, or to foretell the incidents that can only be foreseen by God.

SECT. II.

Another instance of that feminine weakness of character, often produced by a confined education, is a romantic twist of the mind, which has been very properly termed *sentimental*.

Women subjected by ignorance to their sensations, and only taught to look for happiness in love, refine on sensual feelings, and adopt metaphysical notions respecting that passion, which lead them shamefully to neglect the duties of life, and frequently in the midst of these sublime refinements they plump into actual vice.

These are the women who are amused by the reveries of the stupid novelists, who, knowing little of human nature, work up stale tales, and describe meretricious scenes, all retailed in a sentimental jargon, which equally tend to corrupt the taste, and draw the heart aside from its daily duties. I do not mention the understanding, because never having been exercised, its slumbering energies rest inactive, like the lurking particles of fire which are supposed universally to pervade matter.

Females, in fact, denied all political privileges, and not allowed, as married women, excepting in criminal cases, a civil existence, have their attention naturally drawn from the interest of the whole community to that of the minute parts, though the private duty of any member of society must be very imperfectly performed when not connected with the general good. The mighty business of female life is to please, and restrained from entering into more important concerns by political and civil oppression, sentiments become events, and reflection deepens what it should, and would have effaced, if the understanding had been allowed to take a wider range.

But, confined to trifling employments, they naturally imbibe opinions which the only kind of reading calculated to interest an innocent frivolous mind, inspires. Unable to grasp any thing great, is it surprising that they find the reading of history a very dry task, and disquisitions addressed to the understanding intolerably tedious, and almost unintelligible? Thus are they necessarily dependent on the novelist for amusement. Yet, when I exclaim against novels, I mean when contrasted with those works which exercise the understanding and regulate the imagination.—For any kind of reading I think better than leaving a blank still a blank, because the mind must receive a degree of enlargement and obtain a little strength by a slight exertion of its thinking powers; besides, even the productions that are only addressed to the imagination, raise the reader a little above the gross gratification of appetites, to which the mind has not given a shade of delicacy.

This observation is the result of experience; for I have known several notable women, and one in particular, who was a very good woman—as good as such a narrow mind would allow her to be, who took care that her daughters (three in number) should never see a novel. As she was a woman of fortune and fashion, they had various masters to attend them, and a sort of menial governess to watch their footsteps. From their masters they learned how tables, chairs, &c. were called in French and Italian; but as the few books thrown in their way were far above their capacities, or devotional, they neither acquired ideas nor sentiments, and passed their time, when not compelled to repeat *words*, in dressing, quarrelling with each other, or conversing with their maids by stealth, till they were brought into company as marriageable.

Their mother, a widow, was busy in the mean time in keeping up her connections, as she termed a numerous acquaintance, lest her girls should want a proper introduction into the great world. And these young ladies, with minds vulgar in every sense of the word, and spoiled tempers, entered life puffed up with notions of their own consequence, and looking down with contempt on those who could not vie with them in dress and parade.

With respect to love, nature, or their nurses, had taken care to teach them the physical meaning of the word; and, as they had few topics of conversation, and fewer refinements of sentiment, they expressed their gross wishes not in very delicate phrases, when they spoke freely, talking of matrimony.

Could these girls have been injured by the perusal of novels? I almost forgot a shade in the character of one of them; she affected a simplicity bordering on folly, and with a simper would utter the most immodest remarks

and questions, the full meaning of which she had learned whilst secluded from the world, and afraid to speak in her mother's presence, who governed with a high hand: they were all educated, as she prided herself, in a most exemplary manner; and read their chapters and psalms before breakfast, never touching a silly novel.

This is only one instance; but I recollect many other women who, not led by degrees to proper studies, and not permitted to choose for themselves, have indeed been overgrown children; or have obtained, by mixing in the world, a little of what is termed common sense: that is, a distinct manner of seeing common occurrences, as they stand detached: but what deserves the name of intellect, the power of gaining general or abstract ideas, or even intermediate ones, was out of the question. Their minds were quiescent, and when they were not roused by sensible objects and employments of that kind, they were low-spirited, would cry, or go to sleep.

When, therefore, I advise my sex not to read such flimsy works, it is to induce them to read something superiour; for I coincide in opinion with a sagacious man, who, having a daughter and niece under his care, pursued a very different plan with each.

The niece, who had considerable abilities, had, before she was left to his guardianship, been indulged in desultory reading. Her he endeavoured to lead, and did lead to history and moral essays; but his daughter, whom a fond weak mother had indulged, and who consequently was averse to every thing like application, he allowed to read novels: and used to justify his conduct by saying, that if she ever attained a relish for reading them, he should have some foundation to work upon; and that erroneous opinions were better than none at all.

In fact the female mind has been so totally neglected, that knowledge was only to be acquired from this muddy source, till from reading novels some women of superiour talents learned to despise them.

The best method, I believe, that can be adopted to correct a fondness for novels is to ridicule them: not indiscriminately, for then it would have little effect; but, if a judicious person, with some turn for humour, would read several to a young girl, and point out both by tones, and apt comparisons with pathetic incidents and heroic characters in history, how foolishly and ridiculously they caricatured human nature, just opinions might be substituted instead of romantic sentiments.

In one respect, however, the majority of both sexes resemble, and equally shew a want of taste and modesty. Ignorant women, forced to be chaste to preserve their reputation, allow their imagination to revel in the

unnatural and meretricious scenes sketched by the novel writers of the day, slighting as insipid the sober dignity, and matron graces of history,* whilst men carry the same vitiated taste into life, and fly for amusement to the wanton, from the unsophisticated charms of virtue, and the grave respectability of sense.

Besides, the reading of novels makes women, and particularly ladies of fashion, very fond of using strong expressions and superlatives in conversation; and, though the dissipated artificial life which they lead prevents their cherishing any strong legitimate passion, the language of passion in affected tones slips for ever from their glib tongues, and every trifle produces those phosphoric bursts which only mimic in the dark the flame of passion.

SECT. III.

Ignorance and the mistaken cunning that nature sharpens in weak heads as a principle of self-preservation, render women very fond of dress, and produce all the vanity which such a fondness may naturally be expected to generate, to the exclusion of emulation and magnanimity.

I agree with Rousseau that the physical part of the art of pleasing consists in ornaments, and for that very reason I should guard girls against the contagious fondness for dress so common to weak women, that they may not rest in the physical part. Yet, weak are the women who imagine that they can long please without the aid of the mind, or, in other words, without the moral art of pleasing. But the moral art, if it be not a profanation to use the word art, when alluding to the grace which is an effect of virtue, and not the motive of action, is never to be found with ignorance; the sportiveness of innocence, so pleasing to refined libertines of both sexes, is widely different in its essence from this superiour gracefulness.

A strong inclination for external ornaments ever appears in barbarous states, only the men not the women adorn themselves; for where women are allowed to be so far on a level with men, society has advanced, at least, one step in civilization.

The attention to dress, therefore, which has been thought a sexual propensity, I think natural to mankind. But I ought to express myself with more precision. When the mind is not sufficiently opened to take pleasure

*I am not now alluding to that superiority of mind which leads to the creation of ideal beauty, when he, surveyed with a penetrating eye appears a tragi-comedy, in which little can be seen to satisfy the heart without the help of fancy.

in reflection, the body will be adorned with sedulous care; and ambition will appear in tattooing or painting it.

So far is this first inclination carried, that even the hellish yoke of slavery cannot stifle the savage desire of admiration which the black heroes inherit from both their parents, for all the hardly earned savings of a slave are commonly expended in a little tawdry finery. And I have seldom known a good male or female servant that was not particularly fond of dress. Their clothes were their riches; and, I argue from analogy, that the fondness for dress, so extravagant in females, arises from the same cause—want of cultivation of mind. When men meet they converse about business, politics, or literature; but, says Swift, “how naturally do women apply their hands to each others lappets and ruffles.” And very natural is it—for they have not any business to interest them, have not a taste for literature, and they find politics dry, because they have not acquired a love for mankind by turning their thoughts to the grand pursuits that exalt the human race, and promote general happiness.

Besides, various are the paths to power and fame which by accident or choice men pursue, and though they jostle against each other, for men of the same profession are seldom friends, yet there is a much greater number of their fellow-creatures with whom they never clash. But women are very differently situated with respect to each other—for they are all rivals.

Before marriage it is their business to please men; and after, with a few exceptions, they follow the same scent with all the persevering pertinacity of instinct. Even virtuous women never forget their sex in company, for they are for ever trying to make themselves *agreeable*. A female beauty, and a male wit, appear to be equally anxious to draw the attention of the company to themselves; and the animosity of contemporary wits is proverbial.

Is it then surprising that when the sole ambition of woman centres in beauty, and interest gives vanity additional force, perpetual rivalships should ensue? They are all running the same race, and would rise above the virtue of mortals, if they did not view each other with a suspicious and even envious eye.

An immoderate fondness for dress, for pleasure, and for sway, are the passions of savages; the passions that occupy those uncivilized beings who have not yet extended the dominion of the mind, or even learned to think with the energy necessary to concatenate that abstract train of thought which produces principles. And that women from their education and the present state of civilized life, are in the same condition, cannot, I think, be controverted. To laugh at them then, or satirize the follies of a being who

is never to be allowed to act freely from the light of her own reason, is as absurd as cruel; for, that they who are taught blindly to obey authority, will endeavour cunningly to elude it, is most natural and certain.

Yet let it be proved that they ought to obey man implicitly, and I shall immediately agree that it is woman's duty to cultivate a fondness for dress, in order to please, and a propensity to cunning for her own preservation.

The virtues, however, which are supported by ignorance must ever be wavering—the house built on sand could not endure a storm. It is almost unnecessary to draw the inference.—If women are to be made virtuous by authority, which is a contradiction in terms, let them be immured in seraglios and watched with a jealous eye.—Fear not that the iron will enter into their souls—for the souls that can bear such treatment are made of yielding materials, just animated enough to give life to the body.

Matter too soft a lasting mark to bear,
And best distinguish'd by black, brown, or fair.

The most cruel wounds will of course soon heal, and they may still people the world, and dress to please man—all the purposes which certain celebrated writers have allowed that they were created to fulfil.

SECT. IV.

Women are supposed to possess more sensibility, and even humanity, than men, and their strong attachments and instantaneous emotions of compassion are given as proofs; but the clinging affection of ignorance has seldom any thing noble in it, and may mostly be resolved into selfishness, as well as the affection of children and brutes. I have known many weak women whose sensibility was entirely engrossed by their husbands; and as for their humanity, it was very faint indeed, or rather it was only a transient emotion of compassion. Humanity does not consist “in a squeamish ear,” says an eminent orator. “It belongs to the mind as well as the nerves.”

But this kind of exclusive affection, though it degrades the individual, should not be brought forward as a proof of the inferiority of the sex, because it is the natural consequence of confined views: for even women of superior sense, having their attention turned to little employments, and private plans, rarely rise to heroism, unless when spurred on by love! and love, as an heroic passion, like genius, appears but once in an age. I therefore agree with the moralist who asserts, “that women have seldom so

much generosity as men"; and that their narrow affections, to which justice and humanity are often sacrificed, render the sex apparently inferior, especially, as they are commonly inspired by men; but I contend that the heart would expand as the understanding gained strength, if women were not depressed from their cradles.

I know that a little sensibility, and great weakness, will produce a strong sexual attachment, and that reason must cement friendship; consequently, I allow that more friendship is to be found in the male than the female world, and that men have a higher sense of justice. The exclusive affections of women seem indeed to resemble Cato's most unjust love for his country. He wished to crush Carthage, not to save Rome, but to promote its vain-glory; and, in general, it is to similar principles that humanity is sacrificed, for genuine duties support each other.

Besides, how can women be just or generous, when they are the slaves of injustice?

SECT. V.

As the rearing of children, that is, the laying a foundation of sound health both of body and mind in the rising generation, has justly been insisted on as the peculiar destination of woman, the ignorance that incapacitates them must be contrary to the order of things. And I contend that their minds can take in much more, and ought to do so, or they will never become sensible mothers. Many men attend to the breeding of horses, and overlook the management of the stable, who would, strange want of sense and feeling! think themselves degraded by paying any attention to the nursery; yet, how many children are absolutely murdered by the ignorance of women! But when they escape, and are destroyed neither by unnatural negligence nor blind fondness, how few are managed properly with respect to the infant mind! So that to break the spirit, allowed to become vicious at home, a child is sent to school; and the methods taken there, which must be taken to keep a number of children in order, scatter the seeds of almost every vice in the soil thus forcibly torn up.

I have sometimes compared the struggles of these poor children, who ought never to have felt restraint, nor would, had they been always held in with an even hand, to the despairing plunges of a spirited filly, which I have seen breaking on a strand: its feet sinking deeper and deeper in the sand every time it endeavoured to throw its rider, till at last it sullenly submitted.

I have always found horses, animals I am attached to, very tractable when treated with humanity and steadiness, so that I doubt whether the violent methods taken to break them, do not essentially injure them; I am, however, certain that a child should never be thus forcibly tamed after it has injudiciously been allowed to run wild; for every violation of justice and reason, in the treatment of children, weakens their reason. And, so early do they catch a character, that the base of the moral character, experience leads me to infer, is fixed before their seventh year, the period during which women are allowed the sole management of children. Afterwards it too often happens that half the business of education is to correct, and very imperfectly is it done, if done hastily, the faults, which they would never have acquired if their mothers had had more understanding.

One striking instance of the folly of women must not be omitted.—The manner in which they treat servants in the presence of children, permitting them to suppose that they ought to wait on them, and bear their humours. A child should always be made to receive assistance from a man or woman as a favour; and, as the first lesson of independence, they should practically be taught, by the example of their mother, not to require that personal attendance, which it is an insult to humanity to require, when in health; and instead of being led to assume airs of consequence, a sense of their own weakness should first make them feel the natural equality of man. Yet, how frequently have I indignantly heard servants imperiously called to put children to bed, and sent away again and again, because master or miss hung about mamma, to stay a little longer. Thus made slavishly to attend the little idol, all those most disgusting humours were exhibited which characterize a spoiled child.

In short, speaking of the majority of mothers, they leave their children entirely to the care of servants; or, because they are their children, treat them as if they were little demi-gods, though I have always observed, that the women who thus idolize their children, seldom shew common humanity to servants, or feel the least tenderness for any children but their own.

It is, however, these exclusive affections, and an individual manner of seeing things, produced by ignorance, which keep women for ever at a stand, with respect to improvement, and make many of them dedicate their lives to their children only to weaken their bodies and spoil their tempers, frustrating also any plan of education that a more rational father may adopt; for unless a mother concur, the father who restrains will ever be considered as a tyrant.

But, fulfilling the duties of a mother, a woman with a sound constitution, may still keep her person scrupulously neat, and assist to maintain her

family, if necessary, or by reading and conversations with both sexes, indiscriminately, improve her mind. For nature has so wisely ordered things, that did women suckle their children, they would preserve their own health, and there would be such an interval between the birth of each child, that we should seldom see a houseful of babes. And did they pursue a plan of conduct, and not waste their time in following the fashionable vagaries of dress, the management of their household and children need not shut them out from literature, or prevent their attaching themselves to a science, with that steady eye which strengthens the mind, or practising one of the fine arts that cultivate the taste.

But, visiting to display finery, card-playing, and balls, not to mention the idle bustle of morning trifling, draw women from their duty to render them insignificant, to render them pleasing, according to the present acceptance of the word, to every man, but their husband. For a round of pleasures in which the affections are not exercised cannot be said to improve the understanding, though it be erroneously called seeing the world; yet the heart is rendered cold and averse to duty, by such a senseless intercourse, which becomes necessary from habit even when it has ceased to amuse.

But, we shall not see women affectionate till more equality be established in society, till ranks are confounded and women freed, neither shall we see that dignified domestic happiness, the simple grandeur of which cannot be relished by ignorant or vitiated minds; nor will the important task of education ever be properly begun till the person of a woman is no longer preferred to her mind. For it would be as wise to expect corn from tares, or figs from thistles, as that a foolish ignorant woman should be a good mother.

SECT. VI.

It is not necessary to inform the sagacious reader, now I enter on my concluding reflections, that the discussion of this subject merely consists in opening a few simple principles, and clearing away the rubbish which obscured them. But, as all readers are not sagacious, I must be allowed to add some explanatory remarks to bring the subject home to reason—to that sluggish reason, which supinely takes opinions on trust, and obstinately supports them to spare itself the labour of thinking.

Moralists have unanimously agreed, that unless virtue be nursed by liberty, it will never attain due strength—and what they say of man I extend to mankind, insisting that in all cases morals must be fixed on immutable

principles; and, that the being cannot be termed rational or virtuous, who obeys any authority, but that of reason.

To render women truly useful members of society, I argue that they should be led, by having their understandings cultivated on a large scale, to acquire a rational affection for their country, founded on knowledge, because it is obvious that we are little interested about what we do not understand. And to render this general knowledge of due importance, I have endeavoured to shew that private duties are never properly fulfilled unless the understanding enlarges the heart; and that public virtue is only an aggregate of private. But, the distinctions established in society undermine both, by beating out the solid gold of virtue, till it becomes only the tinsel-covering of vice; for whilst wealth renders a man more respectable than virtue, wealth will be sought before virtue; and, whilst women's persons are caressed, when a childish simper shews an absence of mind—the mind will lie fallow. Yet, true voluptuousness must proceed from the mind—for what can equal the sensations produced by mutual affection, supported by mutual respect? What are the cold, or feverish caresses of appetite, but sin embracing death, compared with the modest overflowings of a pure heart and exalted imagination? Yes, let me tell the libertine of fancy when he despises understanding in woman—that the mind, which he disregards, gives life to the enthusiastic affection from which rapture, short-lived as it is, alone can flow! And, that, without virtue, a sexual attachment must expire, like a tallow candle in the socket, creating intolerable disgust. To prove this, I need only observe, that men who have wasted great part of their lives with women, and with whom they have sought for pleasure with eager thirst, entertain the meanest opinion of the sex.—Virtue, true refiner of joy!—if foolish men were to fright thee from earth, in order to give loose to all their appetites without a check—some sensual wight of taste would scale the heavens to invite thee back, to give a zest to pleasure!

That women at present are by ignorance rendered foolish or vicious, is, I think, not to be disputed; and, that the most salutary effects tending to improve mankind might be expected from a REVOLUTION in female manners, appears, at least, with a face of probability, to rise out of the observation. For as marriage has been termed the parent of those endearing charities which draw man from the brutal herd, the corrupting intercourse that wealth, idleness, and folly, produce between the sexes, is more universally injurious to morality than all the other vices of mankind collectively considered. To adulterous lust the most sacred duties are sacrificed, because before marriage, men, by a promiscuous intimacy with women, learned to consider love as a selfish gratification—learned to separate it not only

from esteem, but from the affection merely built on habit, which mixes a little humanity with it. Justice and friendship are also set at defiance, and that purity of taste is vitiated which would naturally lead a man to relish an artless display of affection rather than affected airs. But that noble simplicity of affection, which dares to appear unadorned, has few attractions for the libertine, though it be the charm, which by cementing the matrimonial tie, secures to the pledges of a warmer passion the necessary parental attention; for children will never be properly educated till friendship subsists between parents. Virtue flies from a house divided against itself—and a whole legion of devils take up their residence there.

The affection of husbands and wives cannot be pure when they have so few sentiments in common, and when so little confidence is established at home, as must be the case when their pursuits are so different. That intimacy from which tenderness should flow, will not, cannot subsist between the vicious.

Contending, therefore, that the sexual distinction which men have so warmly insisted upon, is arbitrary, I have dwelt on an observation, that several sensible men, with whom I have conversed on the subject, allowed to be well founded; and it is simply this, that the little chastity to be found amongst men, and consequent disregard of modesty, tend to degrade both sexes; and further, that the modesty of women, characterized as such, will often be only the artful veil of wantonness instead of being the natural reflection of purity, till modesty be universally respected.

From the tyranny of man, I firmly believe, the greater number of female follies proceed; and the cunning, which I allow makes at present a part of their character, I likewise have repeatedly endeavoured to prove, is produced by oppression.

Were not dissenters, for instance, a class of people, with strict truth, characterized as cunning? And may I not lay some stress on this fact to prove, that when any power but reason curbs the free spirit of man, dissimulation is practised, and the various shifts of art are naturally called forth? Great attention to decorum, which was carried to a degree of scrupulosity, and all that puerile bustle about trifles and consequential solemnity, which Butler's caricature of a dissenter, brings before the imagination, shaped their persons as well as their minds in the mould of prim littleness. I speak collectively, for I know how many ornaments to human nature have been enrolled amongst sectaries; yet, I assert, that the same narrow prejudice for their sect, which women have for their families, prevailed in the dissenting part of the community, however worthy in other respects; and also that the same timid prudence, or headstrong efforts, often disgraced the

exertions of both. Oppression thus formed many of the features of their character perfectly to coincide with that of the oppressed half of mankind; for is it not notorious that dissenters were, like women, fond of deliberating together, and asking advice of each other, till by a complication of little contrivances, some little end was brought about? A similar attention to preserve their reputation was conspicuous in the dissenting and female world, and was produced by a similar cause.

Asserting the rights which women in common with men ought to contend for, I have not attempted to extenuate their faults; but to prove them to be the natural consequence of their education and station in society. If so, it is reasonable to suppose that they will change their character, and correct their vices and follies, when they are allowed to be free in a physical, moral, and civil sense.*

Let woman share the rights and she will emulate the virtues of man; for she must grow more perfect when emancipated, or justify the authority that chains such a weak being to her duty.—If the latter, it will be expedient to open a fresh trade with Russia for whips; a present which a father should always make to his son-in-law on his wedding day, that a husband may keep his whole family in order by the same means; and without any violation of justice reign, wielding this sceptre, sole master of his house, because he is the only being in it who has reason:—the divine, indefeasible earthly sovereignty breathed into man by the Master of the universe. Allowing this position, women have not any inherent rights to claim; and, by the same rule, their duties vanish, for rights and duties are inseparable.

Be just then, O ye men of understanding! and mark not more severely what women do amiss, than the vicious tricks of the horse or the ass for whom ye provide provender—and allow her the privileges of ignorance, to whom ye deny the rights of reason, or ye will be worse than Egyptian task-masters, expecting virtue where nature has not given understanding!

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

*I had further enlarged on the advantages which might reasonably be expected to result from an improvement in female manners, towards the general reformation of society; but it appeared to me that such reflections would more properly close the last volume.

Essays

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Are Women Human?

Wollstonecraft's Defense of Rights for Women

RUTH ABBEY

Despite its title, Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* says relatively little about what actual rights women should be accorded (Taylor 2003, 55; Frazer 2008, 251). Over the course of a few pages toward the end of chapter nine, some hints do appear. These include financial independence and being able to run for political office, along with the opportunity to be educated as physicians and to study politics (176–177). Women should be allowed to “earn their own subsistence” (177) in fields other than prostitution, education, and millinery. They must be granted “a civil existence in the State, married or single” (178; see also 215).¹ But here, where Wollstonecraft is at her most explicit about the opportunities women should have, the language of rights is absent. Indeed, including its title, the term “rights” appears only a little over thirty times in the text.² For a tract ostensibly devoted to championing the proposal that women should be rights bearers, this is curious.

This chapter proposes two explanations for this lacuna: one contextual, the other theoretical. It probes the depths of Wollstonecraft's thinking, drilling down to the metaphysical foundation of her defense of rights. It explores her swingeing critique of the legal, political, social, economic, intellectual, and moral condition of women in societies like Britain and France in her time. It also shows how her deeper views about metaphysics and ontology inform her attack. This chapter then grapples with the paradox of Wollstonecraft urging women's rights while being scathingly critical of most women (Taylor 2003, 5, 17). It concludes by making audible some of the echoes of this pioneering defense of rights for women in contemporary feminist debates.

What Lies Beneath

The first explanation for Wollstonecraft's failure to say much explicitly about rights is contextual. In the early years of the French Revolution, debates about rights were raging (Brody 1985, 7). Because *The Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* forms part of the background to the *Rights of Woman*, we can infer that the sort of rights she has in mind are individual rights to liberty and property, to equality before the law, to political participation, to equal opportunity, to habeas corpus, and to freedom of expression and press. And indeed, these civil and political rights do cover the things mentioned in chapter nine. Financial independence, for example, would seem to require a right to property. A right to political participation would allow women to run for office. The principle of equal opportunity would open studies and professions to women. Equality before the law would afford married women a civil existence, rather than subsuming this under their husbands'. Although it usually goes unstated, the contextual background is manifest in the *Rights of Woman's* dedication to Talleyrand-Périgord, which makes it clear that Wollstonecraft was trying to influence the debate in France about whether "women are to be excluded, without having a voice, from a participation of the natural rights of mankind" (23).³ More specifically, Talleyrand was introducing a proposal for public education that included all boys but only orphan girls, and which had been influenced by Rousseau's philosophy of sexual difference (Tomaselli 1995, 320; Gunther-Canada 2001, 101–102, 114).

The second reason for Wollstonecraft's failure to specify the rights women should be granted derives from the structure of her argument. Contrary to appearances,⁴ her defense of rights is highly systematic,⁵ operating at several mutually reinforcing levels. Its foundation is theological or metaphysical. Wollstonecraft builds her defense of rights "on the perfection of God" (40), "that wise Being who created us and placed us here" (39). A monotheist, she takes God to be "powerful, wise, and good . . . all things were created by him, . . . all beings are dependent on him" (211; see also 214). From her theology, Wollstonecraft generates an ontology of the human with two crucial components. First, all have been endowed with an immortal soul (80), which means that the life humans lead on this earth is not all there is: there is a beyond, or an afterlife, for which this life is a preparation. Possession of an immortal soul is not just an interesting fact about humans but bears a number of moral imperatives for how they should act and what they should value. Wollstonecraft frequently speculates on what it would mean were humans in general or women in particular purely

mortal (46, 54, 57, 136). Were they born only to die and disappear without a trace, the pursuit of pleasure would be hard to criticize. But because this life is but a brief and partial phase in an eternal existence, frittering it away on transient pleasures amounts to squander (61, 90–91, 102–104, 119). As this intimates, an unspoken premise of Wollstonecraft's theology seems to be that "the High and Lofty One" (72) does nothing without a purpose.⁶ As He endowed humans with an immortal soul, this design feature should be acknowledged and respected, steering humans' actions and choices.

The second distinguishing feature of the human being is the capacity for reason: "improveable reason is . . . the dignified distinction which raises men above the brute creation, and puts a natural sceptre in a feeble hand" (30; see also 37, 79–80, 128).⁷ God placed this power in the hands of all humans and, once again, he did so for a purpose. Reason makes it possible for humans to understand themselves, the deity, and their relationship to Him. That relationship is one of dependence but also of emulation: humans should strive to imitate the Supreme Being's qualities. "Why should he lead us from love of ourselves to the sublime emotions which the discovery of his wisdom and goodness excites, if these feelings were not set in motion to improve our nature, of which they make a part, and render us capable of enjoying a more godlike portion of happiness?" (40; see also 59, 61, 72, 135, 158, 192). Wollstonecraft's advocacy of emulation of the deity provides one explanation for her rejection of the Rousseauian premise that virtue varies according to sex (52–53, 65, 77, 204–205). For her, there is one God and so one standard of goodness, to which all humans should aspire.⁸ Each should employ this "eternal rule of right" (164) to imagine how his or her conduct appears from a God's eye view.

Humans are, therefore, "placed on this earth to unfold their faculties" (30), with reason being chief among these.⁹ Wollstonecraft even calls the "right of acting according to the direction of his own reason" the "birth-right of man" (184). While she does not believe that all humans are capable of the same feats of reason (91 note), all possess some rationality, and each should be allowed to increase his or her endowment as far as possible. Indeed, superior rationality should be the only basis for the power of one human over another,¹⁰ and even then "the submission is to reason, and not to man" (62). Reason's chain of command leads, moreover, ultimately back to God: "to submit to reason is to submit to the nature of things, and to that God, who formed them so, to promote our real interest" (186). Only power that can be rationally defended is not arbitrary just as, conversely, "the being cannot be termed rational or virtuous, who obeys any authority, but that of reason" (224).

This explains Wollstonecraft's understanding of morality or virtue, terms she seems to use interchangeably. In good Socratic-Platonic fashion, she maintains that "virtue, to deserve the name, must be founded on knowledge" (119; see also 141, 186, 187, 205).¹¹ Any individual who fails to exercise reason is incapable of morality: only by understanding our conduct and motives can we be good. Following rules imposed by others or acting on the basis of custom, convention, public opinion, or habit does not qualify as moral behavior (77, 162). Because it is "a farce to call any being virtuous whose virtues do not result from the exercise of its own reason" (47), she inveighs against attempts "to educate moral beings by any other rules than those deduced from pure reason, which apply to the whole species" (59; see also 82).¹²

The political level of Wollstonecraft's argument comes last: humans should have rights so that they can freely exercise their reason and understand their duties to themselves, their familiars, their fellow citizens, and God. The possession of rights affords the freedom and opportunity to unfold distinctively human capacities. Her endorsement of the rights discourse that was becoming prominent in Europe thus appears at the summit of a much deeper argument, and it is this deeper argument that occupies most of the *Rights of Woman*.

Wrongs Done To and By Women

Condemning relentlessly the way her society educates women, Wollstonecraft employs the term "education" in both a broad and a narrow way. Its broad meaning is equivalent to what is today called socialization, a general process including the sorts of cultural signals, messages, and meanings children imbibe informally as they mature (87, 102). Its narrower meaning is closer to what we mean by education, referring to the formal transmission of knowledge, information, and skills that takes place during childhood and adolescence. Education in both senses was shaped by the wider view about a person's proper place in society. Thus the sort of education in the narrow sense that Rousseau prescribes for Sophie in Book V of *Emile* is a function of his view about women's proper social role. When Wollstonecraft laments the sorry state of women's education (29), she means education in both senses, but her major focus is women's socialization, or what would today be called the social construction of gender. Were the conception of women's social role to change, as she hoped it would, then the sort of education they receive, in the narrow sense, would need to be

reconceived, too. Indeed, the *Rights of Woman*'s penultimate chapter "On National Education" outlines some proposals for reforming education in the narrow sense.

But other social structures need to change, too—and dramatically. By giving both men and women a capacity for reason, their creator endowed them with ontological equality, but the social, economic, legal, and political structures within which they live defy that original condition, rendering women weak and dependent. Wollstonecraft complains that "the very constitution of civil governments has put almost insuperable obstacles in the way to prevent the cultivation of female understanding" (82). Against this she protests: "Who made man the exclusive judge, if woman partake with him the gift of reason?" (23).

Because of her theology, nature is (for Wollstonecraft, as for Rousseau), a byword for the good. Yet women are its "fair defect" (71, 82).¹³ Given the "Gracious Creator's" (95) benevolence and perfection, a defect of nature is almost a contradiction in terms. In a fundamental ontological sense, women are, as we have seen, men's equals (95). Yet society actively and systematically discourages them from developing their reason, insisting instead that they defer all matters of judgment to their male protectors (99). So women are in the paradoxical position of possessing a capacity for reason but denied opportunities to unfold this. "The present corrupt state of society . . . enslave[s] women by cramping their understandings" (48). Instead of being educated to be rational, "the mighty business of female life is to please" (215): encouraged to attend excessively to their appearance, seek pleasure, and please men, they waste their lives in pursuit of fleeting and superficial things (219–220).¹⁴ Yet, as indicated above, Wollstonecraft is adamant that this is an improper way for any being blessed with an immortal soul to spend its time. Thus by nature, women are rational and immortal, yet the society in which they live suspends them in a defective state by preventing or dissuading them from developing their reason and engaging in activities suitable to an immortal being (60, 99–100, 174).

The corollary of Wollstonecraft's association of morality with reason is that by preventing women from developing their reason, society is also forbidding them from becoming moral. As she asks Talleyrand, "how can woman be expected to co-operate unless she know why she ought to be virtuous? unless freedom strengthen her reason till she comprehend duty, and see in what manner it is connected with her real good" (22). Just as "reason is absolutely necessary to enable a woman to perform any duty properly" (91), so no duty can be binding "which is not founded on reason" (23; see also 89–90). Yet Wollstonecraft's most damning critique of the failure to

extend rights to women is that their current education (in both senses) prohibits them from cooperating with “the Supreme Being’s” design for them (107; see also 117). The current form of social organization stands in direct violation of the way creation was originally conceived by “the Author of all good” (138). As well as being an offense to God and in flagrant violation of his intention for his human creatures, the deprivations women suffer by being unable to realize their potential for rationality, virtue, and independence spreads “corruption through the whole mass of society” (31). Chapter nine closes with the warning that “the two sexes mutually corrupt and improve each other . . . Chastity, modesty, public spirit, and all the noble train of virtues, on which social virtue and happiness are built, should be understood and cultivated by all mankind, or they will be cultivated to little effect” (168; see also 207).

To illustrate the high social costs of women’s defective, unnatural condition, Wollstonecraft points out how poorly equipped they are for their key social roles as wives and mothers (32, 60, 94–95, 117, 181–82, 208, 221–223).¹⁵ Raised to see marriage as the grand ambition of their lives (32, 87), they set out to attract the wealthiest suitor possible. Taught that the surest way to win such a husband is by pleasing him, women conform to the ideal that men are supposed to desire: innocent (a euphemism for ignorant, according to Wollstonecraft), weak, dependent, obliging, obedient. But as she warns, the art of pleasing is also an art of deception, and women trained therein will not long be satisfied with the attention of one man. They will, instead, go on trying to attract and please men other than their husbands. In this way, women’s socialization produces faithless wives, even if it is only by desirous eyes and imaginations that roam (53–54, 92, 100, 111–112, 147). Women’s socialization also produces incompetent mothers. Physically weak and morally disabled, they are ill suited to the important task of rearing children (69, 168). One of their earliest maternal duties—breastfeeding—is abandoned in the interests of fashion and elegance (100). Without the ability to guide their emotions with reason, they either neglect or indulge their children (181, 222). Empty-headed women have nothing to teach their children and, lacking any general principles to inform their own conduct, they can do no other than impart to their offspring an inadequate moral education. Women also see their husbands as rivals for their children’s affections, and as daughters mature, their mothers come to resent them as competitors for male attention.

Wollstonecraft contends that the massive and multifaceted power that men exercise over women rests on as shaky a foundation as the supposed divine right of kings that the French Revolution was in the process of de-

molishing. Hence her bold hope that “the *divine right* of husbands, like the divine right of kings, may . . . in this enlightened age, be contested without danger” (67).¹⁶ She urges the Revolution’s supporters to further their work by dismantling any mythical and arbitrary claim to authority that men have over women on the basis of sex alone (23). As “children of the same parent,” a more appropriate way for God’s creatures to interact is to “reason together, and learn to submit to the authority of reason” (128). She implores her readers to “strengthen the female mind by enlarging it, and there will be an end to blind obedience” (50). If defenders of the Revolution wish to promote social and political progress, they must include women in the population of rights-bearers. As she warns Talleyrand, if woman “be not prepared by education to become the companion of man, she will stop the progress of knowledge and virtue” (22; see also 66).

One of Wollstonecraft’s strategies for defending rights for women is, therefore, to mount an urgent utility argument for extending “the abstract rights of man” (23) to them. Once rights are respected, and “sound politics diffuse liberty, mankind, including woman, will become more wise and virtuous” (63). Only then can women carry out their particular duties and become “affectionate wives and rational mothers” (29; see also 171, 174–176, 205, 208–209, 222–223). But unless and until that happens, women’s condition must impede and retard the social progress that supporters of the Revolution hoped it would unleash (66). Nonetheless, whatever the very real social benefits Wollstonecraft anticipates from rights dissemination, her primary concern is the perfectionist one of creating opportunities for women and men to act in accordance with their God-given nature and realize their potential as rational, moral, immortal beings (Brody 1985, 56–57; Taylor 2003, 12, 226). Women’s “first duty is to themselves as rational creatures” (175; see also 37). As humans, “the grand end of their exertions should be to unfold their own faculties and acquire the dignity of conscious virtue” (52).¹⁷ But Wollstonecraft’s theology means that there is, ultimately, no conflict between her consequentialist and deontological arguments in defense of rights for women, because the just and benevolent Supreme Being has so arranged things that doing the right thing will bring salutary consequences.

Women as Rights-bearers

Because of their current education (in both narrow and broad senses), the overwhelming majority of women are not just defective and destructive

wives and mothers but also poor candidates for rights. Ignorant, weak, dependent, and frivolous, they are also cunning, manipulative, and artful (45, 60, 143–146, 220–221). “The conduct and manners of women . . . evidently prove that their minds are not in a healthy state” (29). They occupy the paradoxical position of being simultaneously slaves and tyrants: while their political, social, legal, and economic conditions enslave them to men, their appetite for and exercise of arbitrary sexual power gives them a taste of the power of tyrants (33, 62, 66, 70–71, 94, 198).¹⁸ But women strive to please and manipulate men because this is the only way in which they can exercise power: their “exertion of cunning is only an instinct of nature to enable them to obtain indirectly a little of that power of which they are unjustly denied a share: for, if women are not permitted to enjoy legitimate rights, they will render both men and themselves vicious, to obtain illicit privileges” (24; see also 54, 144, 167). The best way to expunge this pernicious form of arbitrary power is to accord women rights and permit them to pursue power openly and via the same avenues as men.

It is for this reason that Wollstonecraft vindicates rights for “woman” rather than “women”: it is the abstraction, rather than women as currently constituted, that warrants rights. Unlike Harriet Taylor and John Stuart Mill in the mid-nineteenth century, Wollstonecraft could take no inspiration from any early women’s rights movement. Her vindication could only operate at the level of potential: being endowed with reason, women should be capable of many of the same pursuits and possibly the same achievements as men. Deprived of empirical evidence, Wollstonecraft has to make an abstract argument in defense of rights for an ideal of woman.¹⁹ But she would also insist that only by being granted rights will women show themselves to be worthy of rights, for only then will they be able to develop their talents as independent rational and moral beings. As the *Rights of Woman*’s closing page prophesies, “it is reasonable to suppose that they will change their character, and correct their vices and follies, when they are allowed to be free in a physical, moral, and civil sense . . . Let woman share the rights, and she will emulate the virtues of man; for she must grow more perfect when emancipated, or justify the authority that chains such a weak being to her duty” (226).

That the rights women should be granted are generic human rights is evident in Wollstonecraft’s complaint that “the *rights* of humanity have been . . . confined to the male line from Adam downwards” (115, emphasis original). As this suggests, she does not outline any special category of rights for women. What she “sturdily maintains” of duties seems applicable to rights too: “women . . . may have different duties [from men] to

fulfill; but they are *human* duties, and the principles that should regulate the discharge of them . . . must be the same” (77).²⁰ Wollstonecraft’s vindication of human rights for women explains the question in the title of this essay, “Are Women Human?”²¹ Her answer is yes and no. The question must be answered in the negative on the basis of what she sees around her, for women are systematically denied opportunities to become the free, rational, independent, virtuous, dutiful, equal, human beings they were designed by their maker to be. They are educated (in both senses) to become “feminine, according to the masculine acceptance of the word” (204), which defines it in opposition to all that Wollstonecraft associates with being human (29–30, 61, 204). This same question of whether women are human can also be answered in the affirmative, however, when the focus shifts from their current degraded condition to their ontological potential, when they are considered “in the grand light of human creatures, who, in common with men, are placed on this earth to unfold their faculties” (30). Society needs to be reformed to empower women to realize that potential. As part of this process, the greatest human right women can be accorded is the right to “obtain a character as a human being” (31).

As a group, men have made more progress at becoming human than have women, and Wollstonecraft amusingly welcomes the (selective) “masculinization” of women insofar as it involves “the attainment of those talents and virtues, the exercise of which ennoble the human character” (30). This might cause contemporary feminists to worry that her very conception of the human bears a masculine bias.²² It is illuminating to note in this context her refusal to call the understanding of her much admired Mrs. Macaulay “masculine.” A mature, profound thinker, Macaulay “was a proof that a woman can acquire judgment, in the full extent of the word” (132). Further evidence that Wollstonecraft does not confound the masculine with the human is that many men still fall far short of realizing their human potential. She could, therefore, meaningfully pose the question “are men human?” Major impediments to men actualizing their human potential include the power of aristocracy and inherited property, which were targeted in her first vindication and continue to be attacked throughout the *Rights of Woman* (170). Wollstonecraft fervently hopes the French Revolution will dissipate these toxic forces. But the *Rights of Woman* identifies the degraded state of women as another major obstacle to men realizing their human potential. Men and women must be partners in the realization of their shared humanity.²³ Anchoring her ontology of the human in her theology also gives Wollstonecraft a way of aspiring toward a gender-inclusive, rather than a gendered, conception of the human, for God

embodied humans in two forms—male and female. But when it comes to the soul, sex is irrelevant: only the body is sexed (60; see also Botting 2006, 197). Ultimately, however, Wollstonecraft would have to admit, as Mill did after her, that she doesn't know what women are like and therefore how gender should influence our understanding of what it means to be human. Women have been so diminished and stunted by their socialization that it is impossible to tell what they are, and are not, capable of achieving. And who knows what men will be capable of when accompanied by free, independent, and equal women. What it means to be human is yet to be actualized.

Then and Now

No feminist thinker in the Western tradition would, to my knowledge, gain-say Wollstonecraft's basic point that women should enjoy the same rights as men. However, feminist theorists have expressed reservations about the adequacy of extending the "rights of man" to women. Many fear that rights discourse embeds a masculine perspective. Because rights discourse was developed by, for, and about men, there are doubts about whether it can reflect women's experiences and satisfy their needs. According to Catharine MacKinnon, "to be a person, an abstract individual with abstract rights, may be a bourgeois concept, but its content is male" (MacKinnon 1989, 229; see also Stetson 1996, 166).

The "ethic of care" school of thinking has forwarded one strand of criticism of the masculine character of rights discourse. The debate about the ethic of care and the ethic of justice was sparked by Carol Gilligan's critique of Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral maturation. Gilligan's influential *In a Different Voice* (1982) proposes that the sort of moral reasoning Kohlberg associates with maturity—universalist, abstract, deontological, impartial—more closely captures masculine styles of thinking. The feminine voice of moral reasoning, by contrast, discloses an ethic of care, focusing on relationships and their preservation rather than on discrete individuals. The ethic of care gives more prominence to responsibilities than rights; it frames ethical dilemmas in terms of compromise and conciliation rather than applying mathematical formulae, and it is interested in concrete details and context rather than abstractions.²⁴

Another strand of feminist analysis to expose the masculine bias of rights discourse points to its accentuation of civil and political rights. In

defending such goods as freedom of speech, press, and assembly, and habeas corpus, rights are designed to make citizens as free from government interference as is compatible with public order and the equal freedom of other citizens. Again, feminist critics do not say that these freedoms are irrelevant to women, nor that they would be better off without them (Smart 2005, 138–141). They claim instead that emphasizing these rights neglects the issue of liberty, equality, and security in the domestic sphere, which is where many of the abuses and much of the oppression that happens to women on the basis of gender occurs. To quote MacKinnon again, “abstract equality has never included those rights that women as women most need and never have had” (MacKinnon 1989, 229). In Nancy Hirschmann’s assessment, “rights have been inadequate in tackling sexist barriers, because the framework in which they exist often cannot even see harm to women as harm, such as pornography, rape, or even sexual harassment” (Hirschmann 1999, 39). As Susan Okin reminds us, women’s rights are more likely to be infringed upon by those close to them—fathers, brothers, husbands—than by the state (Okin 2005, 85–87; see also Okin 1998a, 35–36; Okin and Ackerly 1999, 141–142).

The “women’s rights as human rights” movement has, however, forced feminist critics of rights discourse to reconsider some of their concerns about its masculine orientation. This began as a grassroots phenomenon, arising when women around the world talked about their problems and realized that traditional conceptions of human rights were insufficient (Okin and Ackerly 1999, 143, 147, 155; Okin 2005, 87). It became clear that human rights “must be reconceptualized in crucial ways if they are to address the multiple and serious ways in which the rights of women are violated because they are women” (Okin 2005, 83; see also 1998b). Martha Nussbaum lists some of “the inequalities that women suffer inside the family: inequalities in resources and opportunities, educational deprivations, the failure of work to be recognized as work, insults to bodily integrity” and complains that “traditional rights talk has neglected these issues” (Nussbaum 2006, 290). In order to detect and prevent all forms of abuse, rights must be available not just against the state but also to protect individuals from one another, including family members.

Rather than abandon human rights discourse altogether, feminist theorists came to portray the rights that women need—rights against violence in the private sphere, for example—as integral parts of the human rights package. The women’s rights as human rights movement reconfigured human rights away from their original masculine model to make them more

inclusive of women's needs and experiences (Okin 1998a, 34–35). This movement illustrates very practically that rights discourse is not irredeemably masculine but can be deployed by women for their own purposes, to defend things such as the individual's right to freedom from the fear of domestic and sexual violence. Women across the globe are actively appropriating human rights discourse to render it more fully human. Notwithstanding her earlier criticisms of rights discourse, MacKinnon congratulates this movement for "beginning to make human rights an honest term" (MacKinnon 2006, 2), hoping that "human rights can give back the humanity the rapist takes away" (MacKinnon 2006, 14, see also 105). She declares that "a worldwide movement of women . . . is remaking equality . . . [this] is not premised on being the same as men, but on ending violation and abuse and second-class citizenship because one is a woman. . . . From this work has come a concept of equality as lack of hierarchy rather than sameness or difference . . . a refusal to settle for anything less than a single standard of human dignity and entitlement" (MacKinnon 2006, 107–108).

From even this brief foray into the idea of women's rights as human rights,²⁵ we can discern some of the ways in which it realizes Wollstonecraft's pioneering vision of women as rights-bearers. One crucial requirement for portraying women's rights as human rights is questioning how the public-private separation has traditionally been drawn. As Nussbaum says, "recently, feminists have won international recognition of many important human rights of women. But to do so they have had to challenge the public-private distinction, which is deeply bound up with traditional liberal rights thinking" (Nussbaum 2006, 290; see also Okin 2005, 86–87; Okin and Ackerly 1999, 155). As implied above, rights discourse had focused on protecting rights in the public realm, keeping citizens maximally free from government intervention. The household was depicted as a private space, into which government should intrude as little as possible. However, this version of the public-private distinction conceals the ways in which a person's rights can be violated in the household.

Wollstonecraft does not adhere to any strict public-private separation (Abbey 1999, 87, 90; see also Sapiro 1996, 35–37; Muller 1996, 51; Stetson 1996, 171–172). On the contrary, she repeatedly acknowledges their mutual implication, insisting that "public spirit must be nurtured by private virtue" (169) because "public affections, as well as public virtues, must ever grow out of the private character" (193). For that reason, the "truly benevolent legislator . . . [makes] private virtue . . . the cement of public happiness" (174). Women's "private virtue" should serve the "public benefit" (178). She believes, as we have seen, that granting women rights

will make them more effective wives and mothers, so a change in what is notionally the public sphere will have significant and salutary ramifications for so-called private life.

Wollstonecraft also challenges any strict public-private separation when portraying the family as the first school of citizenship (Abbey, 1999, 86–87; Botting 2006), claiming that “if you wish to make good citizens, you must first exercise the affections of a son and a brother. . . . Few, I believe, have had much affection for mankind, who did not first love their parents, their brothers, sisters, and even the domestic brutes, whom they first played with” (193). Her denial of any strong public-private separation is also encapsulated in her repeated use of the term “tyranny” to attack arbitrary power wherever it takes hold. She condemns tyranny in spheres including and beyond the public-political one—be it tyranny of men over women; of women over men; of parents over children and servants;²⁶ of children over servants; or teachers over children.

The women’s rights as human rights movement resists any idea that women must become like men in order to enjoy the promise and protections of rights. Observing that “the equality . . . is not premised on being the same as men,” MacKinnon identifies, as we have seen, “a concept of equality as lack of hierarchy rather than sameness or difference” (2006, 108). This, too, resonates with the *Rights of Woman’s* attempt to reconcile sex difference with the realization of a common humanity for both genders. Wollstonecraft never suggests that women should become identical to men, referring instead to their particular duties. For her as for MacKinnon, equality with men demands not sameness but the absence of hierarchy in their relations. Or more specifically, in Wollstonecraft’s case, it is, as suggested above, the removal of arbitrary hierarchy, of distinctions that violate human equality without some rational justification. This ideal informs her vision not just for gender relations but also for all social relations.

MacKinnon underlines the appeal to “a single standard of human dignity and entitlement” (MacKinnon 2006, 108) in the articulation of women’s rights as human rights. Okin and Ackerly also pay attention to the notion of dignity, observing that “most strands of international feminism have . . . coalesced around . . . the basic feminist premise that all human beings, female and male, are of equal worth and are therefore equally worthy of dignity and respect” (Okin and Ackerly 1999, 136, see also 137, 140–141, 144, 157). Wollstonecraft insists upon equal treatment for men and women, with the same moral and political standards being applied to both. She also emphasizes human dignity and respect. Affording women the same oppor-

tunities as, and diminishing their dependence upon, men will allow them “to feel the dignity of a rational will that only bows to God” (61); it will “let them attain conscious dignity by feeling themselves only dependent on God” (62); and it will empower them “to act with consonant independence and dignity” (124). Given their ontological equality, women’s social, political, legal, intellectual, and economic dependence on men strips them of their dignity as humans. Wollstonecraft’s society strips women of their human dignity in the way it educates them (in both senses of the term) (80; see also 176). The attainment of “true dignity of character” requires them to be educated in a manner antithetical to that recommended by Rousseau (67). Perhaps Wollstonecraft’s strongest statement about the need for women to enjoy human dignity comes in her rallying cry that “it is time to effect a revolution in female manners—time to restore to them their lost dignity—and make them, as a part of the human species, labour by reforming themselves to reform the world” (71).²⁷

The ideal of respect plays a seminal, and complementary, role in the intersecting personal and political moralities Wollstonecraft espoused: “respect for man, as man, is the foundation of every noble sentiment” (153). She championed both self-respect and the mutual respect that only becomes possible in relations of equality. Women should “be taught to respect themselves as rational creatures” (122). A self-governing being earns its own respect, and little can be dearer to it than that (128). One of the many benefits of granting women rights is that “[we] would learn to respect ourselves” which would, in turn, improve the quality of women’s affection for men (179). Women do not currently seek men’s respect: they “are only anxious to inspire love, when they ought to cherish a nobler ambition, and by their abilities and virtues exact respect” (29; see also 62). These twin aspects of respect thereby become symbiotic, with self-respect enhancing respect for others and vice versa. So along with all individuals respecting themselves, Wollstonecraft wants to see men and women respecting one another, and indeed, for respect to become the currency of all social relations. When society is in a healthy state, respect circulates in all spheres—marriage (76, 123, 129), parent-child relations (75, 187 note), among friends,²⁸ within schoolrooms, between citizens. Such respect might change its form and intensity from one sphere to another, with “the modest respect of humanity, and fellow-feeling” (153) uniting citizens. But these all belong to the species of feeling Wollstonecraft calls respect, which means recognizing the rational capacity and equal human worth of other persons.²⁹ Respect is the antonym to tyranny in Wollstonecraft’s political-moral economy.

This is not to suggest that every dimension of Wollstonecraft's defense of rights for women finds an echo in contemporary feminist thinking. Few feminists today would ground rights in a religious metaphysics. And Wollstonecraft's understanding of dignity, respect, morality, and duty are intimately connected to this foundation. Many (but not all) feminists would be cautious about accentuating rationality in the way she does. Moreover, Wollstonecraft has to defend the idea of rights for an abstraction—woman—whereas the commitment to women's rights as human rights has evolved from actual women identifying their needs and articulating their demands (MacKinnon 2006, 107). In this closing section, therefore, I have tried to suggest some of the ways in which Wollstonecraft's ideas about rights continue to resonate without insisting that nothing has changed. Along with being ahistorical,³⁰ any such approach would obscure the distinctive and original aspects of her vindication of rights for woman.

NOTES

1. This would require the repeal of coverture. Brody (1985, 67) speculates that Wollstonecraft would have said more about this legislation in her planned second volume.
2. The term "duty" appears sixty times, and "duties" eighty-one.
3. Indeed, just under a third (nine) of the text's direct references to rights appear in this Dedication.
4. Brody refers to the book's many digressions and "lack of coherent organization" (1985, 41; see also Taylor 2003, 51).
5. As Taylor points out, Wollstonecraft strove to provide a "systematic philosophic analysis" (2003, 50). Halldenius (2007) also reads Wollstonecraft as a systematic theorist of rights, and her analysis has much to recommend it. She pays much less attention to the theological bases of Wollstonecraft's view of rights than I do, however. Taylor (2003, 3–4, 12, 93–94) finds that many of Wollstonecraft's contemporary interpreters have neglected religion's fundamental role in her thought. Taylor sets out to rectify this, as does Botting, who tracks the changes in Wollstonecraft's religious views over time. During the period when the *Rights of Woman* was penned, Botting identifies "a theodicy with more progressive implications for society and politics" than Wollstonecraft's previous belief in original sin and atonement had permitted (2006, 165; see also 166, 135, 155).
6. Her claim that "he has ordered all things . . . in the same perfect harmony, to fulfil his designs" (211) supports this inference.

7. Taylor (2003, 53, 58) attributes to Wollstonecraft a capacious, rather than Cartesian, conception of reason that includes feeling and imagination (Sapiro 1996, 35; Green 1995, 84–85).
8. Chapter seven's insistence on modesty for men and women provides a good illustration of this general position. See Halldenius (2007, 90–91) on how Wollstonecraft reconciles her adamancy about a single standard of morality with her belief in the sexes' different social functions.
9. At one point Wollstonecraft even suggests that the virtue and knowledge stored up by an individual can be carried into the next life (128). If so, most women will be traveling light. See Taylor (2003, 106) on this dimension of Wollstonecraft's religious thought.
10. Her ideal is "a meritocracy based on reason" (Brody 1985, 63).
11. She endorses "conversations, in the socratic form" for use in classrooms (199). Gunther-Canada compares the *Rights of Woman* to "the intensely political pedagogy of Plato's *Republic*" (2001, 118).
12. This conviction lies behind chapter seven's critique of female chastity, for its preservation amounts to observing social norms (or manners) rather than any rational appreciation of the virtue of modesty. Wollstonecraft complains that maintaining a reputation for chastity is seen as not just necessary, but also sufficient, for feminine "virtue" (165–166).
13. At one point she calls them "beautiful flaws in nature" (62). Another formulation has women everywhere appearing "a defect in nature" (82).
14. Yet rather than repudiate the art of pleasing, Wollstonecraft distinguishes a superficial from a substantive form. While repeatedly attacking the former, she alludes to "the moral art of pleasing" (218). This would be based on the pleasure one rational being takes in the mind and virtue of another, and within this aesthetic, physical beauty becomes inseparable from moral and mental attainments (202–203).
15. Marriage and motherhood are duties for most, but not all, women (91, 176; see also Frazer 2008, 246).
16. Emphasis original. As chapter eleven indicates, Wollstonecraft also wants to dismantle any conception of the divine right of parents (187). Parents should encourage children's capacity for reason from an early age, and familial affection should, as quickly as possible, come to be founded on, and reinforced by, the mutual respect of reasoners (Brody 1985, 59). Frazer (2008, 40) detects this theme in Wollstonecraft's *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*, written six years earlier.
17. Frazer finds in Wollstonecraft "a perfectionist, virtue-based, causal, theory of politics" (2008, 240) with friendship at its center.

18. Every corps in a standing army also exhibits this dual character of both slave and tyrant (42).
19. A handful of women have circumvented the constraints of their education (in both senses) to become rational and active human beings (29, 60, 88, 207). Examples include “Sappho, Eloisa, Mrs. Macaulay, the Empress of Russia, Madame d’Eon” (104 note[‡]; see also 132 on Macaulay). She is also no doubt thinking, correctly, of herself as part of this exceptional crew. Interestingly, Madame D’Eon was a well-known male transvestite.
20. Emphasis original. A prefatory note promises a discussion of women’s “peculiar duties” in a second volume (25). Wollstonecraft’s untimely death prevented this from materializing. These duties might have spawned additional gender-specific rights.
21. From MacKinnon (2006).
22. For a fuller discussion of this, see Green (1995, 82–103).
23. Wollstonecraft, like Taylor and Mill, tries to educate men about their interest in women’s emancipation (179).
24. Engster (2001) situates Wollstonecraft vis-à-vis the ethic of care debate, arguing that her political philosophy synthesizes the justice and care perspectives.
25. For a fuller discussion, see Reilly (2009).
26. Just how all-encompassing her concept of tyranny is becomes evident when she describes boys who are cruel to animals making “the transition, as they grow up, from barbarity to brutes to domestic tyranny over wives, children, and servants” (203).
27. For similar references to dignity, see 31, 76, 83, while the term “conscious dignity” is repeated on 77. Stetson claims that Wollstonecraft sees rape and seduction as a loss of women’s dignity (1996, 175).
28. Indeed, respect is closely allied with friendship (56, 101, 197), so my claim about its ubiquity in a healthy society complements Frazer’s analysis (2008).
29. Because it recognizes rationality and independence, the term *respect* is also apropos for one’s relationship to writers. The very term *respect* connotes for Wollstonecraft “Mrs. Macaulay,” just as she respects but disagrees with “Mrs. Chapone” (132). We learn that what people respect in one another is what they admire in the Deity—not power, but virtue (Taylor 2003, 107–108), which provides further support for my emulation thesis above.
30. Gunther-Canada (2001), Taylor (2003), and Botting (2006) contextualize Wollstonecraft’s thought historically.

“Genius will educate itself.”

The British Literary Context of Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* and Its Legacy for Women

NORMA CLARKE

In describing her first novel, the semi-autobiographical *Mary, a Fiction* (1788), which featured a heroine who differed from the general run of heroines in being a genius, Mary Wollstonecraft remarked that “genius will educate itself” (Prefatory Note). *Mary, a Fiction* was designed to illustrate this view. Considered as a generalization, such an opinion was and remains uncontroversial: all original thinkers have to find their own way. However, eighteenth-century Britain was a society that declared that women were subordinate to men. Good daughters were dutiful towards fathers, wives promised to obey husbands, sisters expected to be governed by brothers. In this vision, original thinking by women had no place. Moreover, genius was a category culturally defined as male (Battersby 1989). Yet by the 1780s, even the most diehard reactionaries had to acknowledge that clever, thought-provoking, witty, intellectual, and indeed original women had made significant and welcome contributions to the national culture of Britain. It was a paradox, and notions of exceptionality reconciled it. Such women were exceptions to the rule. They were regarded by others as, and understood themselves to be, superior. The word “genius” might override constructions of gender: genius, though rare, was a natural quality which could strike women as well as men. When female genius educated itself, however, and took stock of a social order premised on the subjection of women (and, inevitably, on some repression of that genius) the paradox of-

ten became personal. Most adjusted their expectations—or at least spoke and acted in accordance with prevailing notions of female decorum; but for some, like Wollstonecraft, accommodation was not an option. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* declared the need for radical change in social, cultural, and political attitudes towards women.

It is important to recognize that when the *Rights of Woman* appeared in 1792 it was well received as a contribution to this debate. Though some readers, like the dramatist Hannah Cowley, thought it “unfeminine,” most did not consider it shocking or even especially controversial (Taylor 2003, 27). Reviewers tended to regard it as a work on education, like Wollstonecraft’s *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787). As such, it was one among many in the vigorous eighteenth-century tradition of conduct literature, much of it written by women, of which Hester Chapone’s *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind* (1773) is the pre-eminent example. Conduct literature sought to guide young women in their most important life task: preparing themselves for marriage and dependence. The virtues of self-control were preached, as well as the benefits of a little knowledge of life and books, enough to make them fit companions for their husbands. Conduct literature affirmed the power relations of men and women, while what Wollstonecraft argued for was equality; but few contemporary readers engaged with her arguments. They were able to slide over the more troubling pronouncements, such as that the “desire of being always women, is the very consciousness which degrades the sex” (134). One reason for this was that they were used to being addressed in teacherly tones by authoritative women, as the many reprints of Chapone’s *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind* demonstrated. Similarly, Hannah More’s *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education*, which appeared a few years after Wollstonecraft’s *Rights of Woman*, had sold 11,000 copies by 1801.

Both Chapone and More were bluestockings, protégées of the powerful Elizabeth Montagu, whom Samuel Johnson dubbed “Queen of the Blues.” Respectable bluestockings were not generally sympathetic to the radical ideas canvassed amongst Wollstonecraft’s circle of writers and thinkers, being, for the most part, keen upholders of church and state and the established order (Pohl and Schellenberg 2003). However, to understand the cultural context in which a self-educating female genius born in 1759 came to understand herself and her world, it is helpful to begin with the bluestockings.

The Bluestockings

Elizabeth Montagu launched her salons for serious talk, which marked the beginnings of the bluestocking group, in 1760. The company was mixed, refreshment usually nonalcoholic, and conversation would cover literary, scholarly, artistic, political, and theological themes. Montagu was a wealthy, elite woman with strong connections to the aristocracy, particularly the intellectual Duke and Duchess of Portland whose home, Bulstrode, sheltered the great Anglo-Saxon scholar Elizabeth Elstob. Montagu believed passionately in the importance of mental cultivation for women, read voraciously, and sought out other highly intelligent women for companionship and correspondence. Her own ambitions lay in literary criticism: in 1769 she published her book-length *Essay on Shakespeare*, which was, in part, a challenge to Samuel Johnson's *Preface* to his edition of Shakespeare which had appeared four years earlier. Hearing about the extraordinary gifts of a learned vicar's daughter in Deal, near Canterbury, Montagu introduced herself, and the resulting lifelong friendship with Elizabeth Carter became the bedrock of the bluestocking movement (Clarke 2000a; Pohl and Schellenberg 2003).

Elizabeth Carter achieved fame as a distinguished scholar of ancient Greek. Her translation of *All the Works of Epictetus* (1758) was acknowledged as a major achievement. With Montagu as her patron she published a volume of poems in 1762; her letters, edited by a loving nephew, appeared after her death in 1808. A spinster, fervently dedicated to the single life (the idea of matrimony horrified her), Carter epitomized the bluestocking ideal and helped establish the stereotype of the intellectual woman as a sexless prude. This was, to some extent, the result of a deliberate bluestocking agenda. The bluestockings acquired authority by insisting on their difference from notorious women writers like Aphra Behn, Delarivier Manley, and Eliza Haywood, who had achieved celebrity in the previous era and were associated with warm and worldly evocations of love and passion, modeled on French examples. Such "wanton" foremothers were rejected. In place of representations of the female self as a body, full of desire, the bluestockings promoted mind and spirit (Myers 1990; Clarke 2004).

By the time Wollstonecraft began writing in the 1780s, this dual legacy had nurtured a flowering of female genius, and not only in London. Many provincial cities boasted networks of enlightened sociability in which women participated and were occasionally at the centre. At Lichfield, Anna Seward, poet, literary critic, and letter writer, reigned supreme; she hailed the *Rights of Woman* as "that wonderful book" (Seward 1811,

3:117). Clara Reeve, whose popular *The Old English Baron* (1778) was one of the earliest historical novels, also wrote an important history of the novel as a genre, *The Progress of Romance* (1785); she lived and worked in Ipswich. Norwich nurtured Elizabeth Inchbald, who was first an actress, then a novelist, and later a great theater critic and editor; at Warrington, Anna Barbauld was admired and cherished. But London was the center of literary life, and when Wollstonecraft came to London after the unhappy termination of her employment as a governess with the Kingsborough family in Ireland it was with the determination to make a living as a writer. She went to Joseph Johnson in St. Paul’s Churchyard, a bookseller with a reputation for dealing kindly and professionally with women. He encouraged her to believe it was possible to make writing a career, to be an independent woman who need not look to a husband for financial support, nor to an aristocratic or immensely wealthy patron like Elizabeth Montagu. Johnson was able to keep her supplied with literary work. She described herself as “the first of a new genus,” which wasn’t true—Elizabeth Carter, working for Edward Cave at the *Gentleman’s Magazine* in the 1730s, had equal right to such a title, as, more recently, had Fanny Burney, Hannah Cowley, Hannah More, and Anna Barbauld among others—but she was excited and knew little about the history of women writers, partly because the bluestockings and their supporters had deliberately sought to veil what they saw as a shameful past.

Women Writers in the 1780s and 1790s

The climate in which Wollstonecraft began her career was broadly friendly to women writers at every level. Intellectual women like Montagu and Carter, and the historian Catharine Macaulay, whose massive eight-volume *History of England* had appeared over the twenty years from 1763 to 1783, were “favourably received”—as Clara Reeve put it—as were novelists like Frances Sheridan and Charlotte Lennox, and poets like Anna Barbauld (Reeve 1769). Barbauld’s 1773 volume of poems had been an instant success; Catharine Macaulay was feted in celebrations in Bristol and Bath in 1777 (Hill 1992). Hannah More’s play *Percy*, in 1777, established her as a second-generation bluestocking under Montagu’s patronage. The welcome given to *Evelina* in 1778 brought Frances Burney fame and social elevation. Virtuous female talent, which all these women were considered to exemplify, was celebrated as a social good. Richard Samuel’s 1778 portrait *The Nine Living Muses of Great Britain* depicted prominent women of arts

and letters as individuals to be admired to the point of worship. Montagu, Carter, Barbauld, Elizabeth Griffith, Macaulay, More, and Lennox were posed in a temple, along with the singer Elizabeth Linley and the painter Angelica Kauffman.

The Nine Living Muses of Great Britain captured an idealized moment which, in retrospect, looks slightly ridiculous. As a powerful image of what the bluestockings achieved it is important testimony, but it also reveals a paradoxical problem: social approval of women's literary and artistic achievements rested on elevated notions of goodness and purity. Real women's lives were not played out in temples. Mind could not simply and easily be separated from body; and though there were no men in Samuel's portrait, men's ideas about what women could and should do or abstain from doing could not be disregarded. Elizabeth Linley was an established professional commanding large fees, but when she married Richard Brinsley Sheridan he insisted she cease performing (O'Toole 1997, 85). Catharine Macaulay became a laughingstock when she married a man much younger than herself (Hill 1992).

Mary Wollstonecraft did not participate in the jeering at Catharine Macaulay. For Wollstonecraft, Macaulay's *Letters on Education* (1790) was an important confirmation that others thought as she did, when she argued that there was no innate intellectual difference between the sexes and that the power of abstract reasoning was not inherently male. Wollstonecraft thought Macaulay "the woman of the greatest abilities, undoubtedly, that this country has ever produced" (Todd 2000, 179). Although they had never met, she sent to Macaulay a copy of the second edition of her own *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790), telling her, "you are the only female writer who I coincide in opinion with respecting the rank our sex ought to endeavour to attain in the world. I respect Mrs. Macaulay Graham because she contends for laurels whilst most of her sex only seek for flowers" (Todd 2000, 167). Sadly, Macaulay died before they were able to meet.

The *Rights of Men* confirmed Wollstonecraft's growing reputation as one of the radical thinkers of the London intelligentsia. Through Joseph Johnson she became acquainted with others, meeting William Godwin, Tom Paine, and Thomas Holcroft among them, and becoming friends with Helen Maria Williams, whose *Poems* of 1786 had been immensely popular. (The volume was published by subscription and boasted a list of some 1,500 names—a vast number.) Dissenters dominated the literary avant-garde. Williams, like Wollstonecraft, was strongly associated with liberal "enlightened" dissenting circles. Unlike Wollstonecraft, she also mixed in

higher social groupings and with conservative figures who came to her salon in Portman Square in London. The 1780s saw a stirring of reform movements across Britain, with calls for annual parliaments, liberty of the press, and religious freedoms (dissenters were still subject to constraints). Williams’s mentor Andrew Kippis and Wollstonecraft’s publisher Joseph Johnson founded the London Revolution Society in 1788, just a year after Thomas Clarkson and other Quakers founded the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade. Encouraged, as were all lovers of liberty, by the early stages of the French Revolution, Williams moved to Paris in 1791 and began publishing her *Letters from France*, extracts from which were widely reproduced in periodicals and newspapers and which ran eventually to eight volumes. Anna Seward commented in December 1790 that the *Letters* showed “the sunny-side of the French Revolution,” though she herself feared the “evils of anarchy” that might be unleashed (Seward 1811, 3:44, 45).

English ladies of the late eighteenth century inherited a Protestant tradition that could be understood to assert the spiritual equality of women. This had been a contested theme since the Reformation, but at the very least it gave them a language of spiritual self-assertion which polemicists like Mary Astell and devotional writers like Elizabeth Rowe had employed to powerful effect (Perry 1986, Clarke 2000a [2]). Anna Barbauld, “one of the first women writers in Britain whose influence on the culture met with no resistance” (McCarthy 2008, x) was a Protestant Dissenter who signed her political essays “A Dissenter” or “Citizen.” She campaigned for abolition of the slave trade and reform of the electoral system, as well as religious liberty, calling men to a higher ethic of citizenship in her eloquent denunciation of “Sins of Government, Sins of the Nation” (McCarthy 2008). Liberty was understood as a necessary condition for virtue. Severe and serious bluestockings, living chaste lives, imbued discussions of female liberty with high-minded ideals. Their task was to reform the fallen world of men, which, following the teachings of the Bible, encompassed charitable work amongst the poor, inveighing against the evils of gambling, drunkenness, and other vices, and promoting images of matronly gravitas. Hannah More’s *Thoughts on the Importance of the Manners of the Great* (1788) stressed the duties and responsibilities of the elite, while her friend Sarah Trimmer founded the Sunday School movement for the children of the poor. Heartfelt religious conviction could unleash a torrent of activist energy. The rhetorical connection of patriotism and liberty in the English tradition underpinned some of this, although associations of libertinism and licentiousness (as in the slogan from the 1768 Middlesex election of

the libertine John Wilkes, “Wilkes and liberty!”) made avowed religious purposes all the more important.

There are at least fifty discussions of religious themes in Wollstonecraft’s *Rights of Woman*; Barbara Taylor argues convincingly that for Wollstonecraft, Christian faith and feminism were closely harnessed (Yeo 1997, 15–35). This is not the place to examine Wollstonecraft’s religious beliefs, but it is useful to note the importance of religion for otherwise unlikely bedfellows amongst prominent women writers of the time. Wollstonecraft’s highly personal vision of God brought together religion, eroticism, and female subjectivity with a call for women’s rights that insisted that rights were essential to redemption. Women could obey God rather than man. They needed liberty from men in this world (since the individual man a woman was required to obey might be foolish or depraved) in order to achieve their spiritual goals in the next.

Chief among the unlikely bedfellows was Evangelical activist and social reformer Hannah More. A second-generation bluestocking, politically conservative and a protégée of Elizabeth Montagu, More was at home in high Anglican circles of senior clergy and bishops. She argued that men and women occupied separate spheres and that on the whole women, while improving themselves, should be content in the more limited, domestic sphere assigned by tradition. Hostile to radicalism, she intensely disliked the language of rights, which she mocked as “fantastic and absurd” (Stott 2003, 217). The call for women’s rights she thought presumptuous and only little short of the complete absurdity, as she put it, of children’s rights. She thought women, like children, needed clear boundaries: “there is perhaps no animal so much indebted to subordination for its good behaviour as woman” (Stott 2003, 217). All this did indeed make her the antithesis of Mary Wollstonecraft, as was well noted at the time—not least by More herself, who cultivated an image as arch antifeminist, insisting she would not read the *Rights of Woman* on principle. However, her aptitude for leadership, her organizing skills, and her reforming vision inevitably brought her into conflict with men in power and exposed the contradictions of her position. When Horace Walpole’s friend Mary Berry read Hannah More’s *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799) she was at the same time reading Wollstonecraft’s *Rights of Woman*, and she was notably amused to see how they essentially agreed: “it is amazing, or rather it is not amazing but impossible, they should do otherwise than agree on all the great points of female education.” She also knew Hannah More would be “very angry” with her to be told as much (Stott 2003, 224–225). Ann Stott points out in her biography of Hannah More that the

opening sentence of *Strictures*—“one of the most feminist she ever wrote,” in which More complained that it was “a singular injustice” to give women a defective education and then expect from them “the most undeviating purity of conduct”—linked More to Mary Astell, one of the foremothers of feminism, writing a hundred years earlier. The observation had become a standard feminist trope of the eighteenth century (Stott 2003, 221; Mellor 2000).

Hannah More argued for obedience, contentment, and chastity while mounting an ambitious program of reform that threatened at least two of these demands. Her outreach was formidable. The *Cheap Repository Tracts* (1795–1798), which were designed to counter the “poison” of Tom Paine, were read by an estimated two million readers—a quarter of the population. Wollstonecraft’s *Rights of Woman*, in comparison, sold perhaps 3,000 English copies in its first five years: a respectable but not a startling number.

To reflect upon Hannah More’s career as a writer and reform-minded social thinker in relation to that of Mary Wollstonecraft is useful in another sense. Both women were characteristic of their times in their experimental use of genres. Neither can be easily categorized as writers; both took seriously the capacity of fiction to convey truths about the social and political order and to change minds by affecting feelings. More began as a dramatist, and later wrote a novel, *Coelebs in Search of a Wife* (1809); Wollstonecraft had early success as a novelist with *Mary, a Fiction* (1788) and later gave expression to some of the ideas of the *Rights of Woman* in *Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman* (1798), a novel whose title was designed to draw attention to its connection with the earlier polemical work. Choosing to name her heroines after herself, Wollstonecraft also signaled that these fictions were to be understood as having autobiographical significance. The real-life Mary, whose pronouncements could be read in the *Rights of Woman* as well as in the *Analytical Review* and elsewhere, lent credence to her fictional selves.

Readers in the 1780s and 1790s were conditioned to think about the author while reading female-authored fiction for a number of reasons. Developments in the periodical and newspaper industry were accelerating interest in “celebrities.” There was already a demand for stories about actresses and courtesans; when an actress-courtesan turned author, as Mary Robinson did, the press paid attention, especially because Robinson had been the mistress of the Prince of Wales; his financial settlement on her when they parted was printed in the newspapers. Robinson’s own participation in newspaper culture, as Harriet Guest explains, was significant in

creating her authorial persona (Labbe 2010, 218). Novelists also used prefatory notes and essays to address readers, setting up a dynamic between the author-persona and the fictional characters and events that followed. Mistress of this technique in the 1780s and 1790s was the very successful poet and novelist Charlotte Smith.

For many readers, Charlotte Smith's life exemplified the "wrongs of woman." Wollstonecraft knew her story well because, like other readers of Smith's novels and poetry, she had also read the prefaces where Charlotte Smith "made her sorrows a conspicuous subject" (Fletcher 1998, 93). In reviewing Smith's *Marchmont* in 1796, Wollstonecraft reproved those who criticized Smith for this practice. The author's manner of "alluding to her domestic sorrows," she wrote, should excite sympathy and excuse the acrimonious tone (Wollstonecraft 1989, 5:485). There was much for Smith to be acrimonious about. Married off at fifteen to the son of a wealthy merchant, she had given birth to ten children (six of whom survived) by the time she was thirty, and had discovered that her husband, Benjamin, was a ne'er-do-well who would never provide for them. Benjamin's foolish actions led to heavy debts; meanwhile, his father's attempt—in a muddled, self-written will—to protect his grandchildren led to legal entanglements that went on for decades. In 1783 and 1784, Benjamin Smith was in prison, and his wife stayed there with him for much of that time. The *Elegiac Sonnets, and Other Essays* (1784), which were to go through many editions, appeared while Smith was still imprisoned. (Mary Robinson, another fifteen-year-old opportunistically married off, had also published a volume of poems while living in King's Bench Prison with her wastrel husband, Thomas, who had been arrested for debt in 1775.) Charlotte Smith legally separated from her husband in 1785 (having borne two more children). No formal financial settlement was agreed. As her husband, he still owned everything she possessed, and was entitled to take and sell what he chose. She had everything to fear from him, especially when desperation about his gambling debts drove him to descend on her and treat her with more than his usual brutality. She moved with her family from place to place, keeping up all the while a prodigious output of the writing on which they depended for funds. In her prefaces Smith invited readers to sympathize with her plight, and in her fictions she drew on barely disguised autobiographical materials to question issues like the laws regarding marriage and property that were causing her so much grief (Fletcher 1998).

Charlotte Smith publicly expressed her admiration for Wollstonecraft's writing. Although not part of the circle of writers published by Joseph Johnson, and generally not living in London, she met Wollstonecraft at

least once in the latter part of the 1790s and remained friends with William Godwin after Wollstonecraft's death. When Wollstonecraft situated the eponymous protagonist in *Maria* in a locked asylum, and attributed to her the thought, “was not the world a vast prison, and women born slaves?” she was drawing on associations that were at once part of the political and novelistic rhetoric of the time and which Smith, most notably, had made intensely personal. *Maria*'s imprisonment encodes the injustice and oppression of “matrimonial despotism”: she is a prisoner because of the “selfish schemes of her tyrant—her husband.” She also feels “marriage had bastilled me for life”—a reminder that the throwing open of the Bastille had marked the beginning of the French Revolution (Wollstonecraft 1989, 1:84, 86, 88, 146).

Conservative commentators were inclined to link Smith, Wollstonecraft, and Mary Robinson as prominent women who shared liberal social and political views. Robinson met Wollstonecraft in 1796 and became friends with her and Godwin: they often took tea together. (Smith, by contrast, was anxious not to be confounded with the more scandalous Robinson.) Another tea-drinking friend whose writing was influenced by the *Rights of Woman* and who in some degree, like Smith, influenced Wollstonecraft's later fiction was Mary Hays. Hays became a disciple of Wollstonecraft after submitting her *Letters and Essays, Moral and Miscellaneous* (1792) to the more established writer for her comments. Ironically, Wollstonecraft advised her to be less personal, to keep herself as author in the background; but Hays's experimental, epistolary novel *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796) followed Smith in asserting the authenticity of the fiction by gesturing to the personal experience of the author. Hays had been disappointed in love. She spoke about her sufferings to William Godwin. Caroline Franklin suggests that Godwin might have encouraged Hays to “exorcise her demons through fictionalising her experience in a novel” (Franklin 2004, 173).

If *Maria* is a “fictional corollary” of the *Rights of Woman*, extending its arguments as Moira Ferguson shows, it also pays homage to both Hays's and Smith's autobiographical projections by adopting a confessional manner (Ferguson 1975). Smith's biographer Loraine Fletcher puts it bluntly: while the *Rights of Woman* praises reason and control, “one would hardly recognise the same hand in *Maria*, which is violent and personal” (Fletcher 1998, 278–279). The shift is an important one. Wollstonecraft's legacy in the nineteenth century, especially in Britain, was to be partly determined by what George Eliot in a newspaper article described as the “vague prejudice” against her. This prejudice Harriet Martineau in her *Autobiography* rather more brusquely defined: Wollstonecraft was “a poor victim of

passion” and Martineau, a well-regarded intellectual after the model of the bluestockings, wanted nothing to do with her (Eliot 1855; Martineau 1855, 1:400).

Mary Wollstonecraft’s early writings engaged with male thinkers—like Edmund Burke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and James Fordyce and John Gregory, whose instructions to young women in *Sermons to Young Women* and *A Father’s Legacy to His Daughters* were so widely read—to argue the case for better education for middle class women. Her *Rights of Woman* traced the degradation of women to their lack of education. The vision of womanhood it offered to the capable few was implicitly one of cerebral freedom removed from bodily passion with its suggestion of emotional dependence. The dignity of this bluestocking ideal was undermined by the determination of writers like Charlotte Smith and Mary Hays to protest against the sufferings of women—either at the hands of abusive husbands or, in *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, from the intensity of unrequited erotic passion—and by Wollstonecraft’s decision in *Maria* to extend her analysis to encompass all women, including those of the very lowest social class. Sharing much of the vision of Smith and Hays, Wollstonecraft showed through the character of Jemima that the denial of civil and political rights subjugated women as a sex, and even the supposed exceptions like herself and her fellow writers were thereby limited.

Victorian “prejudice” considered these developments ill judged. It was to be some time before there was general recognition that the questions Wollstonecraft and her fellow writers addressed were central to late-eighteenth-century thinking. Cora Kaplan sums it up: “the reactionaries and rebels of the eighteenth-century world that Wollstonecraft inhabited were engaged in lengthy, nuanced discussions about the character, causes, and consequence of human affect” (Kaplan 2002, 218). They were asking questions about society and sentiment, about self-love and sympathy for others, about virtue, sensibility, sentimentality, fiction, and fact. Above all, they grappled with the nature of human emotion and whether feeling was or was not gendered. The “passion” Harriet Martineau disavowed in her observation about Wollstonecraft was lived, experienced, and investigated by writers of all shades of political opinion, and by men as well as women.

Wollstonecraft’s Legacy

Maria, an unfinished manuscript published posthumously, reflected in its details “the complexities of Mary Wollstonecraft’s own life” (Fergu-

son 1975, 17). It appeared at the same time as the avowed story of her life, *Memoirs of the Author of “A Vindication of the Rights of Woman”* (1798), written by her grieving husband William Godwin as an homage to one whose genius he expected his memoir to perpetuate. Instead, these books unleashed what Pam Hirsch describes as a “feeding frenzy” in the anti-Jacobin press (Hirsch 1996, 51). Counter-revolutionary anxiety was high in the troubled last years of the eighteenth century. It was an easy slippage from the facts of Wollstonecraft’s life that Godwin truthfully revealed—her love affair with Gilbert Imlay, the illegitimate child, the two suicide attempts—to linking her political espousal of liberty with sexual license and mental disturbance. There were cartoons and scurrilous poems. A satire, *The Unsex’d Females: A Poem* (1798) by the Reverend Richard Polwhele, attacked Wollstonecraft for having led other women intellectuals astray. In the index of the *Anti-Jacobin Review* there was an entry for “prostitution” and under it a note: “see Mary Wollstonecraft.” A review in *The Monthly Visitor* attacked her for intellectual arrogance, a sign that the whole construct of exceptionality had broken down: “she was a woman of high genius; and, as she felt the whole strength of her powers, she thought herself lifted, in a degree, above the ordinary trammels of civil communities” (Hirsch 1996, 51).

In the early years of the nineteenth century, the “ordinary trammels” were powerfully reasserted. In the literary context, radical feminist protest of the sort that was seen in Wollstonecraft’s lifetime was more or less silenced for two generations. Charlotte Smith acknowledged her debt to Wollstonecraft in the preface to *The Young Philosopher* (1798), which appeared in the summer of the year Wollstonecraft died. Wollstonecraft, she wrote, was a writer “whose talents I greatly honoured, and whose untimely death I greatly regret.” Both Mary Robinson and Mary Hays turned from fiction to polemic, after the fashion of the *Rights of Woman*, but in marked contrast to Wollstonecraft less than a decade earlier, neither author chose to put her name to her treatise. Mary Hays brought out *Appeal to the Men of Great Britain in Behalf of Women* (1798) anonymously, and although the appeal was a feminist appeal, Wollstonecraft’s name was not mentioned. Men’s prejudices, Hays argued, kept women subjected and mentally subordinate; they needed education as the first stage in the quest for a more elevated status. Gina Luria sees Hays’s *Appeal* as a gentler “companion-piece” to the *Rights of Woman* (Franklin, 227). Mary Robinson adopted a pseudonym, Anne Frances Randall, for *A Letter to the Women of England, on the Injustice of Mental Insubordination* (1799). Like the *Rights of Woman*, her *Letter* focused on education, and like Mary Astell she wanted

to build a university for women. Robinson reminded women they were “not the mere appendages of domestic life, but the partners, the equal associates of man; and, where they excel in intellectual powers, they are no less capable of all that prejudice and custom have united in attributing, exclusively, to the thinking powers of man.” Under the name Anne Frances Randall, Robinson complimented Wollstonecraft on her first page, but again without actually naming her. She honored “an illustrious British female, whose death has not been sufficiently lamented, but to whose genius posterity will render justice” (Randall 1799, 2).

Happily, Robinson’s confidence that posterity would do justice to Wollstonecraft was later realized, but considerable damage was done in the immediate period following her death, by other female writers as well as male writers. Satirical portraits of radical female thinkers appeared in influential novels. Elizabeth Hamilton created Bridgetina Botherim in *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* (1800), a man-chasing character easily read as a composite of Hays and Wollstonecraft; Maria Edgeworth curried favor with conservative readers by creating a minor role in *Belinda* (1801) for the mannish Harriet Freke, a caricature of independent-minded womanhood. Common to these depictions was the attack on self-assertion and visibility. The ideal of female dignity was to become synonymous with a kind of invisibility. Even well-established writers like Anna Barbauld felt the lash, especially because dissenters no longer dominated the literary realm.

Godwin’s *Memoirs of the Author of “A Vindication of the Rights of Woman”* was conceived in the dissenting tradition of celebrating exemplary figures. The literary precedent was the enormously popular *Life of Mrs. Rowe* by Theophilus Rowe (1739). Though Godwin’s book was attacked by many, it was also preserved in the libraries of dissenting academies and Unitarian chapels where young women in succeeding generations had access to it and thus to the ideas of Mary Wollstonecraft. It was the daughters and granddaughters of dissent—Barbara Leigh Smith, Bessie Rayner Parkes, Octavia Hill, Clementia Taylor—who spearheaded Victorian feminism, and they had inherited sympathetic accounts of Mary Wollstonecraft (Hirsch 1996, 53). They would not have been surprised to read William J. Fox in the *Westminster Review* in 1831 asking, “how long will it be before we shall have read to better purpose the eloquent lessons and the yet more eloquent history, of that gifted and glorious being, Mary Wollstonecraft?” (Fawcett 1890, 19). Wollstonecraft went on being thought about and discussed: working-class Owenite radicals looked to her as a symbol of feminism. As a literary woman rather than as a radical political thinker, she was included in Mrs. Elwood’s 1843 *Memoirs of the*

Literary Ladies of England. When the two leading educational campaigners, Emily Davies and Barbara Leigh Smith, met in Algiers in 1858, Leigh Smith told Davies to read Wollstonecraft’s *Rights of Woman*. The *English Women’s Journal*, founded that same year, argued for what Wollstonecraft had argued for: education for women and useful work.

But it was not until the twentieth century that an assertive feminist writer celebrated Wollstonecraft’s achievement as a thinker and novelist. For Virginia Woolf in 1929, Mary Wollstonecraft was a live and active presence. We “hear her voice,” Woolf wrote, “and trace her influence even now among the living” (Woolf 1986, 163). Cora Kaplan writes of Wollstonecraft’s “mutable legacies,” reminding us there is no single legacy, be it “problematic” as Pam Hirsch defines it or not, but a plurality: a rich, unstable mix of “traceable influences and uncanny resemblances” (Kaplan 2002, 246). In her essay “Mary Wollstonecraft’s reception and legacies,” Kaplan offers a thoughtful examination of Wollstonecraft’s reception in the twentieth century, from Virginia Woolf in the post–First World War era to second-wave feminism in the 1970s and beyond. After a long struggle women had the vote, and hence the door was open for progress toward civil and economic equality. But it was already clear that political equality was only part of the answer. The emphasis in the *Rights of Woman* on education, independence, and rational thought had been readily incorporated into the emancipation agendas of Victorian feminism, but the voice women writers and thinkers in mid-twentieth-century Britain heard when they read Wollstonecraft directed them to the more “equivocal” issues concerning the emotions. They noted Wollstonecraft’s insistence that “the most perfect education . . . is such an exercise of the understanding as is best calculated to strengthen the body and form the heart” (Kaplan 2002, 251). It was not clear what kind of education was required to form the female heart in relation to sexual desire or maternal feeling, nor was there agreement about what Wollstonecraft said, or might be understood to have said, about it; but the question of whether emotions were gendered became important once again, this time in the context of the call for sexual liberation.

Debates about the gendered division of thinking and feeling preoccupied the women’s movement, a revisiting of eighteenth-century preoccupations that for Kaplan was “both moving and distressing” (Kaplan 2002, 257). While the Wollstonecraft of the *Rights of Woman* came to be reincarnated as a founding foremother of Western feminism, it was her life rather than her writing that attracted initial attention. It was generally agreed that Wollstonecraft’s life represented a paradox: the spokeswoman for rational thinking seeming to have proved herself to be irrationally passionate. For

some (those of the Martineau persuasion) this was cause for regret; for others it exemplified the popular slogan of the women's movement, "the personal is political," which argued that political discourses ignoring specifically female concerns such as reproduction or violence against women or the sexual division of labor were failing women. During the 1980s and 1990s, Wollstonecraft's writings were studied more widely. The *Norton Anthology of English Literature* included extracts from the *Rights of Woman* alongside Price and Burke as part of the "Spirit of the Age," thus ensuring a very wide readership among university students of English literature. Mary Poovey's influential *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer* (1984) situated a discussion of Mary Shelley and Jane Austen—who when Poovey's book was published were the agreed canonical women authors of the early nineteenth century—in a lengthy account of Wollstonecraft. Scholars disagreed on her legacies and her significance for modern feminism, but as questions about gender and subjectivity and the place of women's writing in the canon established themselves as key questions in literary study, there was little doubt that Wollstonecraft had a central role.

The Personal Is Political

Wollstonecraft's Witty, First-Person, Feminist Voice

EILEEN HUNT BOTTING

Wollstonecraft's novel *Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman* (1798) has been widely identified as an early radical feminist text that inventively deploys first-person narration to share women's personal stories of oppression at the hands of men (Lorch 1990; Taylor 2003, 242–243). Some scholars have pitted *Maria* against Wollstonecraft's earlier *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, preferring the former's style of first-person narration, sense of female solidarity, more open sexuality, and radical sympathy for the poor to the latter's rationalistic arguments, defense of chastity, and middle-class bias (Poovey 1984, 81, 104; Eberle 2002, 33–53, 242). Such a contrast misses the underlying unity of philosophical argument and literary technique across these texts, as well as the overall consistency in Wollstonecraft's feminist political thought.

The *Rights of Woman* is better understood as sharing philosophical, political, and rhetorical common ground with her autobiographical and literary works (Sapiro 1992). Her literary methods—especially irony, satire, understatement, gendered wordplay, and first-person narration—enable her to broach the controversial issue of women's equal human rights alongside men in a wry, personable, and compelling way. Wollstonecraft's witty, first-person, feminist voice clearly rings out of the first major philosophical treatise on women's rights in the wake of the French Revolution. This voice inspired later thinkers to turn their personal experiences into a foundation for feminist political arguments against patriarchy and for women's benefit as a group (Offen 2000, 19–20; Offen 2010).

The *Rights of Woman* strategically and often humorously employs first-person arguments in favor of women's rights, in order to win over her skeptical audience on an issue that was largely seen as a joke in 1792.

The phrase “rights of woman” was bandied about in French, American, and British public discourse—more often comically than seriously—in the early 1790s. In 1791 the *United States Chronicle* published a poem that mocked the nascent demand for women’s rights by referencing the age-old patriarchal idea of women’s arbitrary, sexual manipulation of men: “But have not women greater rights than these; / Do they not rule and govern as they please?” (Anonymous 1791). Beyond the revolutionary-era works of Condorcet and de Gouges in Paris¹, there were more mocking than serious invocations of women’s rights until Wollstonecraft’s *Rights of Woman* precipitated an international shift in public discourse, in Britain, Europe, and especially the young democracy of the United States (Botting and Carey 2004; Zagarri 2007, 44).

Wollstonecraft’s personal insights into female oppression, combined with her wry sense of humor, made the abstract and radical arguments of the *Rights of Woman* easier to understand and accept, especially by a conservative male audience. Her primarily autobiographical and literary writings, such as her letters and *Maria*, are simply a different expression of her creative use of personal narratives in feminist argumentation (Mellor [1975] 1994). The first-person narration of the *Rights of Woman* helps to shape a model of female personal expression that has become integral to modern feminist discourse.

As Janet Todd argues, “she dedicates herself to expressing her Self. In Wollstonecraft’s writings a new female consciousness comes into being. . . . The huge sense of the ‘I’ in Mary Wollstonecraft’s work is often infuriating but it is undeniably modern” (Todd 2000, ix). Although I agree with Todd’s assessment of Wollstonecraft’s first-person narratives as forging a “new female consciousness,” I intend to show that her wry sense of humor also makes her a “modern” voice for women’s rights. While her heavy use of the “I” makes her appear self-centered at times, perhaps especially in her letters, Wollstonecraft’s mastery of irony and understatement in the *Rights of Woman* enables her to rhetorically retreat into the background as she foregrounds the social problem of the general oppression of “one half of the human race” (24).

In what follows, I explain how Wollstonecraft’s the *Rights of Woman* sets up a rhetorically sophisticated and politically influential model for women’s rights arguments. Her treatise draws on abstract arguments for human rights, grounded in the Enlightenment liberal and Protestant philosophies of John Locke and Richard Price, as well as her own personal experiences and observations of patriarchal oppression (Taylor 2003; Gordon

2005, 52; Botting 2006, 160; Taylor 2007, 89). As Karen Offen has argued, Wollstonecraft “insists on and draws extensively on her own experience and her observations of experiences of other women” in developing an empirical basis for her feminist critique of patriarchal oppression (2010, 16).

The legacy of this model of feminist argumentation is vast. Virtually every early nineteenth-century feminist of note—from Hannah Mather Crocker in the United States, to Frances Wright in Scotland, to Flora Tristan in France—had read Wollstonecraft and employed a similar blend of personal narration and abstract arguments for women’s rights (Botting and Carey 2004; Botting 2009). It is not fair to say that Wollstonecraft was the only, or major, influence for this rhetorical and philosophical approach across all cases. However, the study of her turn-of-the-twentieth-century reception illustrates how she became a foundational figure in the development of modern feminism’s idea that the “personal is political.”

Although Carol Hanisch coined this famous feminist slogan in 1969, some of its philosophical roots originate in Wollstonecraft, the *Rights of Woman*, and their international reception by major feminist leaders from the 1890s through the First World War. It was in this time that feminism came to be internationally known as the formal (organized, public, and collective) national and transnational social movements devoted to specific women’s rights issues, such as suffrage, or to the general liberation of women from patriarchal oppression (Cott 1987, 3, 14; Offen 2000, 19–20; Holton 2010). It was also in this era that feminist interest in Wollstonecraft’s the *Rights of Woman*, as well as her biography, experienced a renaissance.

For a diverse range of thinkers and activists—such as the colonial South African feminist Olive Schreiner; the leader of the British women’s suffrage movement Millicent Fawcett; the expatriate American and Wollstonecraft biographer Elizabeth Robins Pennell in Budapest; the founder of the Jewish women’s movement in Germany, Bertha Pappenheim; and the Czech translator of the *Rights of Woman* Anna Holmová of Prague—Wollstonecraft’s *Rights of Woman* and her life story served as rich sources for a new generation of personal and political argumentation on behalf of the liberation of women. Each of these thinkers was inspired to write an introduction to the *Rights of Woman*, and, in some cases, edit or translate the volume as part of the centennials honoring Wollstonecraft’s life and death in the 1890s. Often citing her life and writings as a muse, these intellectual descendants of Wollstonecraft blended first-person narration and abstract arguments in developing their own distinctive conceptions of feminism and readings of the *Rights of Woman*. Together they helped to establish a

rhetorical idiom and theoretical approach that unites a variety of feminist schools of thought, then and now.

“Yet, because I am a woman”: Wollstonecraft’s First-Person Arguments for Women’s Human Rights

The dedication of the *Rights of Woman* opens on a personal and political note: “SIR, Having read with great pleasure a pamphlet which you have lately published, I dedicate this volume to you; to induce you to reconsider the subject, and maturely weigh what I have advanced respecting the rights of woman and national education” (21). Wollstonecraft here addressed Talleyrand-Périgord, the former Bishop of Autun turned French revolutionary. Talleyrand-Périgord had published *Rapport sur l’instruction publique* (1791), which contained a national plan for coeducation in the new French republic. What his otherwise admirable proposal lacked was an overarching defense of women’s rights, beyond the limited right of orphan girls to the same government-sponsored education as boys (Tomaselli 1995, 320).

Talleyrand’s exclusion of women from the full slate of “civil and political rights” was, in Wollstonecraft’s view, a contradiction of the republican principles of the French Revolution: “But, if women are to be excluded, without having a voice, from a participation of the natural rights of mankind, prove first, to ward off the charge of injustice and inconsistency, that they want reason—else this flaw in your NEW CONSTITUTION will ever shew that man must, in some shape, act like a tyrant” (23). She personally challenged Talleyrand, and by implication any progressive male readers who identified with his politics, to move beyond the assumption that women could not and should not be citizens due to their supposed natural inferiority of mind. Unless Talleyrand and other statesmen could provide evidence of women’s lack of reason, and hence their inability to be self-governing citizens, they could not resist her charge that the French republic was a tyrannical and patriarchal sham like the rest of eighteenth-century Europe’s governments.

Wollstonecraft built a strong personal bond with her readers through copious use of first-person narration in the dedication and introduction of the *Rights of Woman*. As Sen notes, her rhetoric effectively expresses her “wrath” for the injustices that face women of her time, and inspires sympathy in her readers for a cause that they might otherwise find foolish or marginal at best (2009, 392). In addressing Talleyrand “as a legislator,”

she played on the ambiguity of whether this phrase modified the “I” or the “you”: “Consider, I address you as a legislator, whether, when men contend for their freedom, and to be allowed to judge for themselves respecting their own happiness, it be not inconsistent and unjust to subjugate women, even though you firmly believe that you are acting in the manner best calculated to promote their happiness?” (23). She implied that she had as legitimate a claim to being a citizen, and even a legislator, as he. With a similar sense of irony, she used the first person to assure her readers of her feminine deportment despite the “contested question” she engaged: “Yet, because I am a woman, I would not lead my readers to suppose that I mean violently to agitate the contested question respecting the equality or inferiority of the sex” (30).

Showing the rhetorical quality of this disclaimer, she quickly dispensed with the idea of the natural basis of gender roles for men and women. Rather than argue that women should become like men by practicing the so-called “manly virtues,” Wollstonecraft argued that all humans should become more virtuous by adhering to the God-given, universal, rational moral law (30). With sarcasm made palpable with her dramatic use of italics, she intoned, “I presume that *rational* men will excuse me for endeavoring to persuade them to become more masculine and respectable” (32). Anticipating the postmodern idea of gender as a social construct, she playfully construed masculinity as a mere hobgoblin: “Indeed the word masculine is only a bugbear” (32; Wingrove 2005). With this economical metaphor, she demoted gender to a product of the overheated imaginations of overgrown children. By peppering the dedication and introduction with such wordplay, irony, sarcasm, and first-person voice, Wollstonecraft enabled even a hostile audience to develop a sympathetic interest in her witty, emotionally riveting, and personally revealing style of feminist analysis.

Chapter one begins with a summary of her abstract arguments for women’s human rights: the idea that women have the same rights as men because they are both human (Okin 1998a). In likely homage to Descartes’s 1637 *Discourse on Method*, she states her philosophical objective: “it appears necessary to go back to first principles in search of the most simple truths” (37).² As with Descartes, she frames her return to first principles in an authoritative first-person voice: “I must be allowed to ask some plain questions, and the answers will probably appear as unequivocal as the axioms on which reasoning is built” (37). She reminds the reader that these principles, while true in the abstract, can be contradicted by the “words or conduct of men” (37). Here, it is clear she is using “men” in the gender-specific sense, to emphasize their culpability for patriarchal oppression.

Wollstonecraft then presents three basic principles of human nature: reason exalts humans over other species; virtue is the end-goal of human rationality; and the passions enable humans to gain knowledge from their experiences. These three principles of human nature are, for Wollstonecraft, the “rights and duties of man thus simplified”: in other words, the recognition and practice of human rights and their corresponding moral duties *are* the realization of humanity’s true nature (37). Using these principles to frame her philosophical argument for the rights of woman, she develops a positive account of how human beings ought to develop in society if their reason and passion are indeed directed toward the realization of virtue and knowledge. As Natalie Taylor and Ruth Abbey show, Wollstonecraft’s account of human nature establishes a morally perfectionistic standard of “reason, virtue, and knowledge” as the norm by which the just development of individuals and societies ought to be judged (37; Taylor 2007, 102; Abbey, this volume, 235).

Despite her moral perfectionism, Wollstonecraft is a political realist about the possibility of putting the “rights and duties” of humanity into practice. Early in chapter one, she acknowledges that “deeply rooted prejudices” and cultural “prescription” are the main obstacles to the realization of her three “abstract” principles of human nature: reason, virtue, and knowledge (37–38). The remainder of the book can be read as an exercise in critical political theory, by which she exposes the artifice and hypocrisy of Enlightenment patriarchalism in order to clear the way for the acceptance and implementation of her egalitarian theory of human rights.

With witty insights grounded in her personal experience, she draws a striking contrast between what women are capable of doing with rights and duties, and the degraded roles that society imposed on them. For example, she laments the practical moral tension between women’s capability for modesty and other human virtues, and the societal double standards which dangerously impute an exclusively “sexual character” or sexual function to their gender (45). To lend credence to her critique, perhaps especially for her female readers, she ironically refers to the spinster fate that awaits modest women in their time: “Where, indeed, could modest women find husbands from whom they would not continually turn with disgust?” (155). Indeed, this was the likely reason for her own single status at the age of thirty-two.

A holistic account of education stands at the core of Wollstonecraft’s political theory. Education—mental, physical, and social—is the means by which human nature is perfected via exercising reason, learning from experience, and practicing universal moral rights and duties. She employs

sarcasm to show how supposedly progressive eighteenth-century educational practices, such as those inspired by Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Emile* (1762), are in fact prejudicial forms of "prescription" that stifle the full development of human beings. In response to Rousseau's "ridiculous stories" which aim "to prove that girls are *naturally* attentive to their persons," she points out that he is mistaking the effect for the cause (69). Girls are not born coquettes, but rather are made vain by following the "daily example" of their mothers and the encouragement of their fathers (69). In a dry aside, she appeals to her empirical observations as a governess and schoolteacher to issue her final, devastating critique of Rousseau's patriarchal view of female development: "I have, probably, had an opportunity of observing more girls in their infancy than J. J. Rousseau—I can recollect my own feelings, and I have looked steadily around me; yet, so far from coinciding with him in opinion respecting the first dawn of the female character, I will venture to affirm, that a girl, whose spirits have not been damped by inactivity, or innocence tainted by false shame, will always be a romp, and the doll will never excite attention unless confinement allows her no alternative" (69). Her modest understatement of her experience with teaching young girls undermined the authority of Rousseau's theoretical generalizations more effectively than a direct assertion of her expertise. It also paved the way for her explication of her substantive view of how girls ought to be raised to be strong and independent in both mind and body. Her vision of girls and boys freely playing together, outside the home or in the schoolyard, became a tenet of nineteenth-century feminist theories of education, especially in the United States (Botting and Carey 2004). Coeducation, including athletics, has since become a civil right in most modern democracies.

Alongside misguided notions of female education, Wollstonecraft pinpointed the institution of patriarchal marriage, held in place by legal prescriptions such as coverture, entail, and primogeniture, as another major cause of women's oppression. In the late eighteenth-century culture of sensibility, girls were raised to believe that they should find a mate like they encountered in romantic novels of the era (Mellor [1975] 1994, xii). Wollstonecraft had no patience for such a frivolous view of women's destiny as drawn from what she mocked as "the herd of Novelists": "I own it frequently happens that women who have fostered a romantic unnatural delicacy of feeling, waste their lives in imagining how happy they should have been with a husband who could love them with a fervid increasing affection every day, and all day" (58). Sarcastically undermining these ladies' delusional fantasy of ever-increasing marital passion, Wollstonecraft

commented, “but they might as well pine married as single—and would not be a jot more unhappy with a bad husband than longing for a good one” (58).

She offered two dignified alternatives to such foolish romance: “that a proper education; or, to speak with more precision, a well stored mind, would enable a woman to support a single life with dignity, I grant; but that she should avoid cultivating her taste, lest her husband should occasionally shock it, is quitting a substance for a shadow” (58). Women could either live “a single life with dignity,” or marry with the rational expectation that their ongoing self-cultivation would give them a more realistic conception of their husbands’ characters. Such realism would enable women to share in a respectful friendship with their spouses, as Wollstonecraft later did with her husband William Godwin. Here and elsewhere in the *Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft spoke in the first person to her sex, to expose the foolishness of the culture of sensibility, and confide some droll advice on the most serious decision they would make as females: to be married or single.

Linking women’s rights to such personal choices to the political realm, Wollstonecraft argued that woman “must have a civil existence in the state, married or single” (178). Coverture, or the English common law idea that a wife was covered under and represented by her husband’s legal identity, had made married women a legal “cypher” in her time (174). The aristocratic practices of primogeniture (giving the eldest son preference in family inheritance) and entail (keeping the family estate in one piece) exacerbated the overall economic inequality of women. Regardless of class, women were incentivized to marry for status and wealth, rather than love or respect of their mates.

Few chose what the unmarried author of the *Rights of Woman* poignantly called “a single life with dignity,” because of the difficulty of making an independent living as a woman; they rather fell into it, as spinsters and widows, or through lowly women’s work as ladies’ companions, wet nurses, governesses, teachers, and “the next class” of “milliners and mantua-makers” (178; Gordon 2005, 19–102). Unveiled in chapters nine through twelve, her solution to this systematic oppression was fourfold: the egalitarian transformation of the family, through abolition of coverture and other patriarchal legal and cultural practices surrounding marriage, inheritance, and child rearing; the expansion of economic opportunities for women, so that they might have the chance for independent careers, not just ill-paying jobs or unequal marriages; the extension of equal civil and

political rights to women; and long-term social reform of gender and class norms through free public coeducation (Botting 2006, 193–205).

Although some scholarship has understated the political character of this treatise, or even downplayed its commitment to the concept of rights, a close reading leaves no doubt that its author clearly declared her intention to defend the “civil and political rights” of her sex (Taylor 2007, 3–4; Offen 2010, 16). Perhaps it is Wollstonecraft’s own use of understatement, alongside the related rhetorical techniques of irony, sarcasm, and satire, which have distracted some readers from recognizing this core purpose of her work. In chapter nine, she challenges the derisory public view of the idea of women’s suffrage with her own feminist sense of wit: “I may excite laughter, by dropping an hint, which I mean to pursue, some future time, for I really think that women ought to have representatives, instead of being arbitrarily governed without having any direct share allowed them in the deliberations of government. But, as the whole system of representation is now, in this country, only a convenient handle for despotism, they need not complain, for they are as well represented as a numerous class of hard working mechanics, who pay for the support of royalty when they can scarcely stop their children’s mouths with bread” (176). By framing her appeal for women’s formal political incorporation with the anticipation of laughter, she preempts such reactionary ridicule of her position, and opens the door to serious consideration of it.

Proceeding with an air of intimate confidence with the reader, she uses “I” three times in the first sentence of this passage to connote *her* personal commitment to this political issue. Playing on verbal and grammatical ambiguities, she makes a political double entendre in stating that “women ought to have representatives, instead of being arbitrarily governed”; this phrase suggests women should not only be able to vote, but also serve as representatives, because male representation of their interests is a sham. With a dramatic turn to satire, she unmasks representative government as the real joke, without the institutionalization of the rights of women and working-class men. She assures her readers that women “need not complain” for they are as “well represented” as the mechanics who, she lets us infer, are disenfranchised too. In likely homage to the satirical inversions of Swift’s “A Modest Proposal” (1729), she grants that women and working-class men at least can support the monarchy with their taxes when they can barely feed their starving children.³

Wollstonecraft used first-person narration in her novel *Maria*—most vividly with the working-class character of Jemima—to reveal the bleak

interior psychology of patriarchal oppression, and to elicit greater sympathy for the cause of women's rights (Taylor 2003, 238–244). The autobiographical basis of *Maria* and many of Wollstonecraft's other publications has been long known and studied, ever since Godwin published the first biography of his wife's life and work, alongside her posthumous writings, in 1798. Their fascinating autobiographical subtext is one reason why these works exerted great personal and literary appeal for female intellectuals in the nineteenth century, including Wollstonecraft's daughters Fanny Imlay and Mary Shelley (Gordon 2005, 447).

My close reading of the first-person narration of the *Rights of Woman* should enable scholars and students to see Wollstonecraft's most influential work as more closely tied to her autobiographical and literary writings, as they are all grounded in *her* personal experience and observation of patriarchal oppression. The other dominant rhetorical methods of the *Rights of Woman*—including irony, wordplay, satire, sarcasm, and understatement—also give the abstract arguments of this political treatise an appealing literary flavor. Indeed, it even shows that feminists can be funny.

First Person Plural: First-Wave Feminist Responses to Wollstonecraft and the *Rights of Woman*

Wollstonecraft directed many of her arguments in the *Rights of Woman* to enfranchised men, because they had the political power to promote the egalitarian transformation of family, society, and state. Some scholars have charged her with misogyny and male identification, for her harsh critiques of the degraded social condition of women of her time, her general presentation of herself as an exception to this rule, and her push for women to have the right to strive for the same moral standards as men have been allowed. Poovey went so far as to claim that she “rejected a female speaking voice” in the *Rights of Woman* (1984, 79).

But as we have seen, Wollstonecraft often spoke in the first person as a woman and to women, in solidarity with their experiences and interests. She also frequently used first-person plural in the *Rights of Woman* to locate herself as part of the broader group of women who face patriarchal injustice: “we might as well never have been born, unless it were necessary that we should be created to enable man to acquire the noble privilege of reason,” she pointed out with dark humor (89). This first-person plural formulation anticipates what has been called the “radical feminist” turn of Wollstonecraft's final novel, wherein the middle-class Maria learns to

identify with the suffering of the working-class Jemima by listening to her personal story of lifelong patriarchal oppression: “thinking of Jemima’s peculiar fate and her own, she was led to consider the oppressed state of women, and to lament that she had given birth to a daughter” (Wollstonecraft [1798] 1994, 54; Lorch 1990). Taylor has emphasized that this sense of solidarity—specifically, the identification of the individual with group oppression—is a psychological precondition for the formation of any social movement to alleviate collective injustice (2003, 238–239).

The nineteenth century saw the rise of organized (formal, public, and collective) feminism, beginning with the 1846 state-level legislative petition and the 1848 Seneca Falls public convention for women’s rights in up-state New York (Ginzberg 2005). Modern feminist activism had informally begun with the women’s political clubs of the liberal stage of the French Revolution, only to be squashed by Robespierre (Landes 1988). Abolitionist, temperance, and benevolent societies also provided a springboard for women’s creative involvement in social reform and informal politics in early to mid-nineteenth-century American culture.

Feminist wings arose within the socialist and anarchist movements in France, Britain, Germany, and the United States. There were foundings of female academies, colleges, and universities, and a push for coeducational access to men’s institutions of higher learning; women’s rights movements from Britain to Russia to Chile were often organized around these educational causes (Stites [1978] 1991, 73–74; Tagle 2005). From the 1830s to the 1860s, feminist ideas quickly spread through complex international networks of like-minded women and men (Anderson 2000). By the 1870s and 1880s, a variety of feminist organizations flourished: from indigenous women’s reading groups in Maharashtra, to evening classes on women’s rights in St. Petersburg, to the National Woman Suffrage Association in the United States (Bykov 1911; Deshpande 2008).

By 1900, many national-level organizations had joined international networks of feminist groups, such as the International Women’s Suffrage Association (Holton 2010). Although the term “feminist” was not coined until 1870 in France, it spread rapidly around the world (Offen 2000, 19–20). It came to be used as a general category, which could describe a variety of arguments and activism against patriarchy and for the well-being of women as a group (Offen 2010, 16).

In 1901, Elvira Lopez in Argentina titled her doctoral dissertation on the international growth of feminism “El Movimiento Feminista.” She located the movement’s philosophical origins with Saint Thomas More, Mary Astell, and especially Wollstonecraft in “Inglaterra,” and then documented

how its ideas spread to the United States and beyond (Lopez 1901, 206). By 1914 “feminism” was the dominant term used to describe activism on behalf of women, including the now global movement for women’s right to suffrage (Cott 1987, 3, 14). The fin de siècle development of this international culture and language for feminism was indebted to Wollstonecraft’s life, her *Rights of Woman*, and her first-person (plural) approach to feminist reasoning and narration.

After being fully translated into French, German, Dutch, and Danish and excerpted in a Spanish periodical within a decade of its debut in 1792, the *Rights of Woman* appeared in five more English editions in the first half of the nineteenth century, in London and New York (Kitts 1994; Botting 2013a). In 1869, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony reproduced the entire text in their feminist newspaper in the run-up to their attempt to include women’s suffrage in the fifteenth amendment to the U.S. Constitution (Botting and Carey 2004). The centennial of the book’s publication sparked two competing editions with introductions by Englishwomen Millicent Fawcett and Elizabeth Robins Pennell. Their editions went through multiple printings in London and New York from 1890 to 1892; copies of each were inscribed and donated by American women’s suffragist Carrie Chapman Catt to the U.S. Library of Congress. They were followed by a new German translation by Bertha Pappenheim in 1899 and the first Czech translation by Anna Holmová, in 1904. Comparative analysis of the forewords to the centennial-era editions of the *Rights of Woman* reveals the enduring power of Wollstonecraft’s first-person style of argument for feminists’ self-understandings of their movement.

Making Mary Wollstonecrafts, Making Modern Feminisms: Five Introductions to Centennial Editions of the *Rights of Woman*

Olive Schreiner, the South African writer famous for her 1883 feminist novel *Story of an African Farm*, penned a draft of an introduction to a never-completed centennial edition of the *Rights of Woman*. As Burdett has shown, the colonial expatriate was active in Karl Pearson’s “Men’s and Woman’s Club” (which originally was to be named after Wollstonecraft) in London in 1885 and 1886. In Pearson’s circle, she was introduced to the publisher Walter Scott.

Presented with her interest in theorizing the late Victorian “sex question,” Scott encouraged the young feminist to introduce a new edition of

the *Rights of Woman* (Burdett 1994, 177). Schreiner worked on the project for three years, but abandoned it in 1889. Although her introduction began with rehashing the standard British Victorian negative assessment of Wollstonecraft's writing and legacies, it quickly turned toward a positive reclamation of the book's visionary understanding of the "necessity" of the "woman's movement" (Schreiner [1889] 1994, 190).

Schreiner noted that the book's demand for women's liberation was rooted in the author's own experiences as a woman: "being a woman, perhaps there was no necessity for her to see it; she knew it" ([1889] 1994, 190). She concluded the essay with her own observations of black women in South Africa, whom she believed demonstrated the "primitive" and natural roots of the universal female sense of their sex's oppression. Schreiner's colonial upbringing gave her a condescending view of these indigenous women as "uncivilised," but she nonetheless opposed British feminists who excluded black women from the vote when the Union of South Africa was formed in 1910.

Despite her prejudices, Schreiner presented her interaction with the local black women as a kind of feminist ethnography. She strove to preserve the cultural distinctions between herself and the indigenous women, in distinguishing between her and her interviewee's first-person voices. She recalled, "I have bent over a woman half flogged to death by her husband, and seen her rise, cut and bleeding, lay her child against her wounded breast, and go and kneel down silently before the grind-stone and begin to grind" ([1889] 1994, 193).

Seeking to understand such "deep" resignation to patriarchal oppression, she interviewed a black woman and translated her explanation at length. Schreiner recorded her interviewee's insight into the black woman's double burden of sex-based and race-based oppression: "we are dogs, we are dogs. There may perhaps be a good for the white women; I do not know; there is no good for the black" ([1889] 1994, 193). This African woman's voice echoed the "I" and the "we" of Wollstonecraft and her fictional alter ego Maria's laments of females' birth into domination. In contrast to the *Rights of Woman's* demand for political reforms to address such systematic injustice against women, however, Schreiner interpreted the black woman's despair as a sign of the "necessity" of women's resignation to sexual domination in primitive societies ([1889] 1994, 193). Despite its troubling social Darwinist conclusion, Schreiner's introduction to the *Rights of Woman* shares Wollstonecraft's appreciation of the rhetorical and methodological value of using the "I" and the "we" in recording women's experiences of degradation at the hands of men.

Elizabeth Robins Pennell had published an 1884 intellectual biography that defended Wollstonecraft against the widespread Victorian British view of her as a morally dissolute practitioner of free love. She stepped in to pen the introduction for publisher Walter Scott's 1891–1892 edition of the *Rights of Woman* when Schreiner left hers incomplete. Pennell's introduction generally used first-person narration to ground her authority in the growing, yet male-dominated, scholarship on Wollstonecraft and the history of women's rights (1891, xxii). She also used first person to signal the international character of the feminist movement, from Wollstonecraft's time to the present. Pennell cited the Hungarian women's rights thinkers that dated to the French Revolution, and signed the essay with her own location: Budapest, 1891.

As in her biography, Pennell reframed Wollstonecraft as an Enlightenment Protestant to make her views on women's human rights less startling to a conservative audience: "that woman, as a human being, has rights was but the inevitable conclusion of the then new philosophical theory, that 'man is born free,' which, as inevitably, had been developed from the premises of the Reformation" (1891, viii). As a biographer, she also perceived the value of reading the *Rights of Woman* as grounded on the authority of Wollstonecraft's personal experiences as a woman: "had she not seen for herself the unspeakable misery caused by the intellectual and domestic degradation of women, she would not have been so quick to discern the flaw in the reasoning of Rousseau and his French and English disciples. Her book gains in force when it is realized how entirely her arguments and doctrines are based on experience" (1891, viii). While she recognized the *Rights of Woman* as the "text book of the new generation of believers in women's rights," Pennell distanced Wollstonecraft from contemporary feminist activists, whom she claimed "have failed to grasp the true meaning of the 'Vindication'" (1891, xxii). Implying that some feminists foolishly wished to escape sexual difference or domestic roles altogether, Pennell's clever feminist rhetoric presented Wollstonecraft as giving women both a broader and a more sensible choice: "to live her own life, to follow her own profession, whether this was solely domestic or no" (1891, xxiii).

Pennell used her introduction to rehabilitate not only the arguments of the *Rights of Woman*, but also Wollstonecraft's biography, for Victorian consumption. She sparingly used first-person narration to highlight her intimate and authoritative understanding of the most controversial aspects of Wollstonecraft's biography. "As far as we can be certain," she noted, Wollstonecraft's adolescent friendship with Fanny Blood was her only "passion-

ate love” prior to falling in love with Gilbert Imlay at the age of thirty-two (1891, xiv). She commented, “I think . . . she was doing what she thought was right” in living with Imlay without a formal wedding ceremony (1891, xv). Finally, Pennell confided, “I know of nothing so tragic in fiction as her second attempt” at suicide after Imlay’s abandonment of her for another woman (1891, xvi). Pennell’s reading of the personal basis of the arguments of the *Rights of Woman* became a model for modern scholarship on Wollstonecraft, which has often taken the form of intellectual or contextual biography (Todd 2000, Taylor 2003, Gordon 2005).

Millicent Fawcett’s 1890 centennial edition of the *Rights of Woman* was indebted to Pennell’s 1884 biography of Wollstonecraft. She similarly framed Wollstonecraft as a product of the Reformation and the rights-based theories of the Enlightenment. Yet she strategically avoided the Victorian controversies surrounding Wollstonecraft’s romantic choices by referencing the authority of recent biographical studies: “the facts of Mary Wollstonecraft’s life are now so well known through the biographies of Mr. Kegan Paul and Mrs. Pennell, and her memory has been so thoroughly vindicated from the contumely that was at one time heaped upon it, that I do not propose to dwell upon her personal history” (1890, 29).

Instead, Fawcett analyzed the arguments of the *Rights of Woman* and their influence on the women’s rights movement: “I have here endeavored to consider the character of the initiative which she gave to the women’s rights movement in England, and I find that she stamped upon it from the outset the word Duty, and has impressed it with a character that it has never since lost” (1890, 29–30). As the leader of the British women’s suffrage cause, Fawcett symbolically identified her work for the “movement” with the ideas of the *Rights of Woman*. Moreover, she provided a reading of the treatise that shrewdly emphasized Wollstonecraft’s pairing of “rights” with “duties” in order to persuade the conservatives in her audience of the moral imperative to support women’s rights including suffrage. She drew a contrast between the depraved eighteenth-century culture, which Wollstonecraft abhorred, and the decency of “our time” (1890, 27). The *Rights of Woman* should thus provide a “pleasing assurance” to modern readers of their moral rectitude, she averred (1890, 27).

While Fawcett, like Pennell, infrequently spoke in the first person in her introduction, she quoted the *Rights of Woman*’s first-person arguments several times, even to the point of repetition: “I have already quoted her saying, ‘I do not want women to have power over men, but over themselves’” (1890, 29). With such concentric circles of first-person argument, Fawcett

managed to identify herself, her feminist “movement,” and her conservative culture with the *Rights of Woman*’s resounding moral defense of female self-governance. Fawcett ultimately recast Wollstonecraft in her own image: she was “the essentially womanly woman” whose far-seeing theory anticipated the commendable Victorian concern with making women’s rights compatible with “the motherly and the wifely instincts” (1890, 23).

Although she underscored the *Rights of Woman*’s visionary commitment to women’s suffrage, careers in medicine, and economic independence, Fawcett displayed her political acumen in accentuating the harmony of these rights with marriage and family life both within Wollstonecraft’s book and in their “own time.” Eberle notes that Fawcett was more explicit in tying the “movement” for women’s rights to Wollstonecraft’s book than Pennell, but misses that they share a strategic feminist rhetorical approach in upholding the value of Wollstonecraft’s life and ideas for their conservative culture (2002, 242).

The centennial of Wollstonecraft’s death inspired several German studies of her life and work, including Bertha Pappenheim’s article “Das Frauenrecht” (1897) and her new German translation of the *Rights of Woman* (1899). Pappenheim was the leader of the Jewish women’s rights movement, best known for founding the Jüdischen Frauenbundes Deutschlands (Jewish Women’s Organization of Germany) in 1904. Pappenheim is also known as “Anna O,” a famous early case of hysteria treated in part by Freud and Brauer (the originator of the “talking cure”). This personal struggle led her to advocate for women’s rights, primarily in the area of education. It also led her to an interest in Wollstonecraft, whom she saw as a kind of “mother” figure for the German Jewish women’s movement (Loentz 2007, 233).

Only the second translation of the *Rights of Woman* into German since Salzmann’s of 1793–1794, Pappenheim’s edition included an introduction that treated Wollstonecraft’s life and ideas. In it she represented Wollstonecraft as a prophetic voice in the wilderness who awakened women’s group consciousness of their rights and duties as human beings: “the first woman who with overwhelming clarity awoke the consciousness in women—and also had the courage to voice—that women have rights, not assumed through raw force or custom, but rather human rights whose basis lies in irrefutable duties” (1899, xiii). Like Fawcett, she read Wollstonecraft as theorizing both the moral and the political means for the emancipation of women: “the means [Wollstonecraft] anticipated in achieving emancipation, freeing the soul of women, range from duty to law” (1899, xx).

Her purpose in translating the treatise was to clarify “the definitions of women’s duties and rights” with the “vibrant wish” that Wollstonecraft’s thoughts would “encounter a better overall understanding today than they ever could one hundred years ago” (1899, xx). Speaking in the first-person plural about the legacies of the treatise for women, Pappenheim wrote, “when we consider the importance of its doctrines, and the eminence of genius it displays, it seems not very improbably that it will be read as long as the English language endures” (1899, xii).

Like Fawcett, Pappenheim stressed that Wollstonecraft did not advocate women’s rights without emphasizing their corresponding domestic duties. She paradoxically characterized Wollstonecraft—who philosophically rejected the notion of gendered virtues and called for a “revolution in female manners” (210) that would recognize both sexes as subject to the same moral standards—as a “a woman, lovely in her person, and in the best and most engaging sense, feminine in her manners” (1899, xiii). Strategically desisting from any discussion of Wollstonecraft’s avant-garde romances with Gilbert Imlay and William Godwin, Pappenheim mentioned Wollstonecraft’s relationship with Henry Fuseli only to say that it awakened her “womanly senses,” without referencing the ensuing scandal of her supposed infatuation with this married man (1899, xiv).

By selectively using Godwin’s *Memoirs* in her editorial commentary on the *Rights of Woman*, Pappenheim depicted the meaning of Wollstonecraft’s life and work in allegorical terms that would personally appeal to the conventional German women of her time: Wollstonecraft overcame a difficult early family life to assert her independence as a woman while retaining her feminine identity. As leaders of feminist movements, Pappenheim and Fawcett’s common tactic was to remake Wollstonecraft into a political symbol of the “womanly” character of the women’s rights advocate. They deployed Wollstonecraft as the iconic *feminine* feminist, to assuage public fears and misunderstandings of their goal to reform traditional gender roles along the more egalitarian lines imagined in the *Rights of Woman*.

Anna Holmová was the Czech translator who introduced Wollstonecraft’s *Rights of Woman* to Prague in 1904. Against the background of the vibrant philosophical reception of John Stuart Mill’s *Subjection of Women* (1869) by Czech feminists in the 1880s and 1890s, she represented Wollstonecraft as more of an enduring emotional touchstone than a contemporary theoretical resource for feminist reform in Austria-Hungary (Feinberg 2006, 22–23). Like Schreiner, she interpreted the *Rights of Woman* as an expression of Wollstonecraft’s lived, and “poignantly felt,” personal

experiences: “but for Wollstonecraft her ideas are a direct expression of the content of her heart; they are not borrowed but rather poignantly felt. Their significance stands out clearly, when we consider their uniqueness in the course of life back then” (Holmová 1904, vi).

Holmová perceptively noted that Wollstonecraft’s famous critique of Rousseau arose from this methodological approach to feminism: namely, her concern with including the voices and experiences of women in her arguments for human rights. According to Holmová, “it pains” Wollstonecraft that Rousseau “does not speak to women and that he does not even ask of them to realize the task of liberation, that he proclaims” (Holmová 1904, xi). Holmová here makes explicit what Schreiner left implied: Wollstonecraft’s great innovation for feminism was her philosophical concern with women’s subjective experiences of oppression and desire for liberation from it.

Holmová used first-person plural to situate her contemporary audience in a sympathetic, yet distant, relationship with the emotionally compelling yet philosophically outdated Wollstonecraft. She acknowledged that Wollstonecraft’s “*Defense of Women’s Rights* . . . contains the entire program of feminism, in fact the whole ideological and emotional foundation, from which grows the emancipation effort. It brought its author fame in her homeland and soon, after being translated into other languages, also in other European countries” (1904, v). Yet she limited the treatise’s relevance for “our era,” in which it was “not a revelation” (1904, v). Wollstonecraft’s arguments for women’s human rights were now philosophically quaint and politically irrelevant because they fully reflected the “rationalistic religion and rationalistic philosophy of her time” (1904, vi).

Holmová concluded that the lasting power of Wollstonecraft’s book lay not in its “philosophical system” but rather in its emotional sway over the “sensibility” of its contemporary feminist readers: “With almost an elementary force stands out the sense that a change, a renewal, is necessary,—and in this immediacy, in this desire, lies the significance of this book, which makes up for its logical and stylistic imperfections. It isolates the author from her [female] contemporaries, but connects her with the striving and longing woman of today, who disagrees with the old ways and who demands freedom to try and to look for new ways” (1904, xvi). Holmová captured the trend in Wollstonecraft’s turn-of-the-century reception. From New York and London to Dresden and Prague, new editions of the *Rights of Woman* upheld Wollstonecraft as a personal and political symbol of the origins of the feminist movement, and the ongoing female struggle to negotiate the norms of womanhood and women’s rights.

Making the Personal *Political*, Again

The well-known scholarship on Wollstonecraft's reception in the early twentieth century has showcased how a variety of feminists embraced her unconventional life story as a personal model for their own experiments in, and literary reflections on, love, sex, and marriage. There is plenty of evidence that a range of thinkers—such as Emma Goldman, Ruth Benedict, and Virginia Woolf—took a primarily biographical and literary approach to reading Wollstonecraft's legacies for modern womanhood (Wexler 1981; Gordon 2005, 451). It was this symbolic iteration of Wollstonecraft as personal icon that was likely the most influential on feminist scholars of the second wave, who have produced numerous important biographical studies of her life and literary analyses of her work since the 1970s.

But we should not forget the political and philosophical impact of the *Rights of Woman* on first-wave feminists, as the comparative study of the forewords to the centennial-era editions of the *Rights of Woman* reveals. The treatise's witty rhetoric and first-person style of argument became an inspiration for nineteenth-century feminists' own reflections on how the personal is especially political for “the most oppressed half of the species” (60). As Wendy Gunther-Canada has noted, each generation of feminists has turned back to rediscover Wollstonecraft and redefine her meaning for their time (1996, 215). First-wave and second-wave feminists tended to miss Wollstonecraft's humor in their serious devotion to excavating her life and personal style of argument for their social movements. The next wave of women's human rights advocates might find in her *Rights of Woman* a refreshingly witty source for their new brand of mimetic, sardonic, and self-referential social criticism (Kort 2011).

NOTES

1. Nicolas de Condorcet's 1790 essay “On the Admission of Women to the Rights of Citizenship” and Olympe de Gouges's 1791 pamphlet “Declaration of the Rights of Woman and Citizen” asked for women to be granted the same civil and political rights as men in the new French republic.
2. Wollstonecraft also appears to indirectly reference Descartes elsewhere in the *Rights of Woman*, when she explains why she is “inclined to laugh at materialists” (143).
3. Wollstonecraft cites Jonathan Swift several times in the *Rights of Woman*, including his “disgusting description of the Yahoos” in *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) (138).

Reading Mary Wollstonecraft in Time

VIRGINIA SAPIRO

I'm sure I had heard of her or encountered her some time earlier, but I really began to get to know her in the stacks of the Graduate Library at the University of Michigan sometime in 1973. I was doing an independent study focusing on the connections between Enlightenment and early liberal theory and the rise of social science. Exploring English observations of the American and French Revolutions offered fertile ground for this study. These were complicated and provocative political phenomena to observe and understand, fraught with danger and promise for those who mined them for implications concerning social experiments of human thought and action, authority and resistance, the invention of political formations, and changing contexts of human action.

And then, serendipity. There she was—a woman among men vigorously debating the causes and meaning of the ongoing French Revolution. Not merely holding her own, but firing the first return shot in what became a historical debate among worthies. Thus, my first serious encounter with the works of Mary Wollstonecraft was, unusually, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, her response to *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, by the influential member of Parliament Edmund Burke.

The Basis of Attraction

I was drawn in immediately. First, of course, this was a woman writing political theory, when only a couple of times in my study of political science and intellectual history had anyone suggested that women did such a thing. There was Hannah Arendt, whose latest book, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, was the most riveting text in my introductory political science course, reinforced by a class trip to New York to see

Robert Shaw's play, *Man in the Glass Booth*, directed by Harold Pinter and starring Donald Pleasence. I had been told about Rosa Luxemburg. I think I was told about Emma Goldman. That was it. So finding a woman engaged in the work of a political theorist, doing what Thomas Paine did, but earlier (although not backwards and in heels), was exciting and revelatory. After all, in those days there were few women in political science, a lot of our elders were not convinced we belonged there, and few in our discipline believed there was anything about women and politics worth studying.

It was not just Wollstonecraft's sex that drove me to seek out more of her writings. I was taken by the way her serious analysis was laced with her passion for the subject. Much as I loved reading political philosophy, seeing glimpses of the author who created these texts shining through moved me. It recalled to my mind visits to my undergraduate professors in political theory and intellectual history (after reading Sir Leslie Stephen's *The History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*) to ask why these people wrote political theory. What motivated them? What were they trying to do? Both professors misunderstood my question, and seemed to interpret it as evidence that I didn't understand the premises and argument of the books. I'm sure I understood their intellectual aspects as well as any young college student might have done. But I wasn't asking about the texts; I was asking about the writers. Why write? Why write political theory? This question, formulated while reading political theory in the politically turbulent years of 1968 to 1970, prefigures my longtime preoccupation with communication as political action. Certainly, beginning with Mary Wollstonecraft, as I became aware of women who spoke and wrote in arenas and of matters in which they were supposed to remain silent, the force of communication as political action became ever more obvious and fascinating.

As I moved on from the *Rights of Men* to the (I learned) more famous *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, I felt the presence of a person with whom I could carry on a conversation in my mind. I was already rather taken with the notion of a Republic of Letters, but reading the work of proto-feminist and feminist writers took on an increasing urgency—an intellectual, personal, and political commitment—in those early days of the regeneration of the women's movement on and off campus. For those of us who had chosen paths that had not yet been forged or, at least, had little traffic ahead, these mental conversations with voyage partners from other times and places were almost unspeakably important. And in those early days, without a feminist canon, without courses and curricula, without guides other than friends and colleagues who were likewise finding their way in what we thought was uncharted territory, the conversation partners

we found were the result of happenstance. In my case, my earliest band of fellow travelers in the early 1970s was quite a crew: Mary Wollstonecraft, Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1966), Emma Goldman (Shulman 1972), Margaret Fuller (1970), Mary Beard (1971), Shulamith Firestone (1970), Sheila Rowbotham (1970), Gayle Rubin (1975), Susan Brownmiller (1975) . . . and within a very few years, a large host of others. Wollstonecraft's personal story was fascinating and titillating enough, certainly, but what made her personally compelling to me was what I could only imagine were the frustrations of trying to develop her ideas and say her piece, even among the impressive group of democratic writers with whom she spent her time. I wanted her to know, sometimes, that we were still listening.

Perhaps most astonishing to me as I came to know Wollstonecraft's work better was the presence of a gendered, palpably (proto-) feminist framework used to discuss something other than the rights and status of women. This analysis became stronger and clearer as she progressed through her very short writing career—it is easy to forget that it was contained within a single decade—culminating in the fragments of her novel published by Godwin as *Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman*. She analyzed the cultural and historical creation of both men and women as gendered and sexual beings. She analyzed social organizations and processes—as diverse as the family, education, the military, and class and race structure—as parallel and interlocked forms of difference and domination. She reached toward a linkage of historical, social, and psychological forces in the understanding of these institutions as well as revolution. And the leitmotif throughout *all* her work was gender—not “women's rights,” but gender (as we would now call it) as a key element of the warp and woof of social organization. This is a point that scholars of Mary Wollstonecraft understand well, and most value in her work, but one which casual readers unfortunately often miss entirely. To underscore this point, in my book *A Vindication of Political Virtue* (1992) I did not focus on “women's rights” and the condition of women until well into the book, and used the antiquated conceit “The Same Subject Continued” as the chapter title.

It was exciting to know our generation was far from the first to reach toward a larger framework of analysis of the role of gender and sexuality. We knew that there had been generations of women who fought for women's rights in at least some arenas. But without courses, curricula, library collections, or other access to the history of women's writing, especially on political and social analysis, that recognition across generations was crucial. More came later as feminist students of the history of women's political writing created and restored the conversation by rediscovering our

rightful conversation partners—those I mentioned above as well as many others who are more commonly read today, and some who have still not received recognition as political thinkers, like Ida B. Wells Barnett (Wells and Dunster 1991) and Anna Julia Cooper (1990), both of whom offered sophisticated analyses of race, gender, and political domination.

I thought that someday I would write on Wollstonecraft, treating her work as the oeuvre of a serious political thinker. I began to take notes, yet one thing led to another, and the notes remained on the shelf.

Reading Wollstonecraft and Taking Women's Lives Seriously

As 1992 approached—the 200th anniversary of the publication of the *Rights of Woman*—I began once again to turn to those notes. There was a burgeoning literature on Wollstonecraft's work from the point of view of literary history and criticism, and a growing number of biographies, but still, little analysis from the point of view of the history of political thought and analysis. I could not let that pass, and thus I returned to Mary Wollstonecraft, the political philosopher. Nevertheless, it was easy to be misinterpreted. Countless times people asked how my *biography* of Mary Wollstonecraft was going. It seemed that if a woman was the subject, it must be about her life, not about her body of work.

But her life did influence my research strategy. How should I read and interpret the political thought of a late eighteenth-century woman with little formal education, no access to great libraries, and only the mentorship and comradeship of her interesting and influential—but quirky—group of acquaintances in Newington Green and London? I could not make the usual assumptions about what she might know. I could not follow the often-used technique in political theory of drawing connections between her texts and previous others' on the basis of similarity, a strategy that rests on assumptions about contact. Women's lives were not like men's. Their knowledge of the intellectual past had to be more haphazard.

I began with months of immersing myself in the various currents of political theory and history of the century leading up to her life that might have influenced this woman in some way. Then I read all of the biographies. I compiled my "Wollstonecraft's Likely Reading List" by identifying the works of her acquaintances as well as those she mentioned or viewed, and I read those. I wanted an empirical basis for determining the connections between her work and that of others. I searched the field of social history

for works that might help me understand the social and political milieu in which Wollstonecraft lived. Especially important were those that focused on the gendered construction of daily life, because it was—and is—all too easy to interpret writings on women through an anachronistic set of understandings of family, work, community life, and even politics. The relatively few works that fit that need, like Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall's then very new (1987) *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850*, were godsend.¹

Because gender and sexuality are so widely viewed as natural and ahistorical, even among social science and humanities scholars in those days, it was even more critical to take care to approach this project on political thought with one's historical imagination turned on, as much as the concept of "historical imagination" is controversial. Even today, for example, in teaching this text, it is too easy to allow students' observations that Wollstonecraft was simply reinforcing the role of women as "mothers and housewives," without any recognition of the realities of work done by the members of a typical household. (How does the role of being "just a housewife" compare to anything we understand today when the first order of business of the day might be to light the fires and throw the bedpan slops out the window? How many men left for the day to an office job, leaving women to run the washing machine?)

The historical imagination is not just important for comprehending the argument through its social context, but also for understanding the language of the text. Once again, this commonplace observation is especially critical given how rare it is for scholars to attend to the gendered dimensions of language. Wollstonecraft herself explored the meanings of "manly" and "masculine" (Sapiro 1992, ch.6). But following is another example that could transform one's whole reading of the *Rights of Woman*: "Contending for the rights of woman, my main argument is built on this simple principle, that if she be not prepared by education to become the companion of man, she will stop the progress of knowledge and virtue; for truth must be common to all, or it will be inefficacious with respect to its influence on general practice. And how can woman be expected to co-operate unless she know why she ought to be virtuous?" (22). These words form the core of Wollstonecraft's letter to Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord that prefaces her book. This sentence is also the crux of much modern feminist criticism of Wollstonecraft. A surface reading of this opening passage seems to compress the reasoning for women's rights into a lowest common denominator, perhaps one calculated for rhetorical acceptability, to make her argument palatable: The reason for according women more dignity and rights will

help them be better “companions” to men. So, some feminists have asked, how much credit should be given to a writer who merely wanted women to be better, more virtuous wives?

But the words in these sentences are fraught with historical dangers. First, and widely understood among scholars of the history of political thought, is the sense with which we should read the reference to virtue. As long as the confluence of the word “virtuous” with “women” and “wives” doesn’t lead us to think only about a special female version of sexual fidelity and modesty of dress, a reader is unlikely to be misled, or at least not for long, because virtue is such an important subject of the book.² But while “virtue,” as Wollstonecraft used it, would include sexual modesty—for women and for men—she spent considerable effort explaining that the virtue she aimed for is a broader notion of principled self-discipline that creates good (Sapiro 1992, ch.2).

Much less noted, if at all, but at least as important, is the ambiguous meaning of the word “companion,” which seems to be widely understood as meaning “wife.” In this sense, Wollstonecraft would seem to be saying that women should be educated to be wives. But any reading of the book suggests she would not have meant that. And indeed, the *Oxford English Dictionary* also suggests a different reading, because there were many common senses of “companion,” and “wife” seems to be only a minor one. Rather, a companion was one who associates, shares, or partakes with another; a thing that matches or resembles another as in a matched set; a friend and equal. True, there are senses in which “companion” has connotations of inequality, and when applied specifically to women it could mean “wife.” But the use here is ambiguous, and in the context of the whole of the *Rights of Woman*, we might equally read her point as arguing, “that if she be not prepared by education to become the [equal partner of man] [companion of man in raising the level of virtue of society], she will stop the progress of knowledge and virtue; for truth must be common to all, or it will be inefficacious with respect to its influence on general practice. And how can woman be expected to co-operate unless she know why she ought to be virtuous?” A different reading indeed.

Only after probing the history and background for months—talk about delayed gratification—did I begin the serious rereading and study of Wollstonecraft’s own works, arranging them chronologically, integrating her long and brief works and correspondence to glean what I could of the development of the thought of this extraordinary political thinker and writer.

It was a challenging time to write a book like this. It was the heyday of poststructuralist and postmodern influences in both feminist and political

theory, with a consequent hostility to the project of historical recovery. Perhaps more important, and a critical backdrop to understanding modern feminist scholarship on Wollstonecraft, was the profoundly ambivalent relationship of feminist theorists to liberal political theory, often caricatured as a narrow class- and race-bound concern with rights narrowly construed. Thus, far from appreciating even the whole of the *Rights of Woman*, let alone that work in relation to Wollstonecraft's earlier and later writings, interpreters have too often flattened her work into a treatise arguing for women to stop making themselves sex objects, to be extended the rights of men, and to be given an education.

Of course, the string of common potted summaries of the history of political philosophy with which we are all familiar could fill volumes of addenda to *1066 and All That* (Sellar and Yeatman 1930). But we are still not in an era in which the contributions of women to the history of political analysis are yet appreciated and integrated into our stories of our political traditions. The flattened Wollstonecraft is a cultural tragedy. But so is the flattened conception of liberal theory within feminist theory.

There is another problem with readings of the *Rights of Woman*: it is the one text readers interested in Wollstonecraft's "political" theory read, and only rare treatments truly take account of its relationship to her other works to help mine its meaning and potential. I am grateful that I encountered the *Rights of Men* before the *Rights of Woman*, because the latter flows so naturally from the former. Indeed, the more famous *Rights of Woman* becomes more comprehensible through the lens of most of her earlier, little-known works. And although they came later, a full account of Wollstonecraft's political theory must also reckon with her history of the French Revolution, the *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark*, and her unfinished novel, *Maria*. Of course her thinking and experience evolved—who could remain unaffected by living in a city wracked with civil war and terrorism, as she did in Paris—but the time span from penning her most famous book until her end was brief, and there were no real revolutions in her thought.

Two aspects, at least, are rendered more visible in the earlier work by reading the later ones in which they are more clearly visible. One is the perversity of domination. Both the *Rights of Men* and, even more, the *Rights of Woman* explore the varieties of forms of domination. But in *An Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution; and the Effect It Has Produced in Europe* and in *Maria*, she expanded on her view of the impact of domination on distorting the minds and character of

people, turning them into twisted, violent creatures regardless of which party in the domination relationship they are. (For elaboration, especially on the French Revolution, see Sapiro 1992, ch 7.) The force of her argument and the vivid representations of it help to highlight the earlier case in the *Vindications*.

The second aspect of the *Rights of Woman* that is rendered more visible by her later work is its nascent Romanticism. As literary critics and historians who study Wollstonecraft know well, her *Letters* was a signal text in the history of Romanticism, highly influential along with the likes of Coleridge, Wordsworth, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and his wife, Wollstonecraft's daughter, Mary Godwin Shelley. But elements of this sensibility are clearly visible in the earlier works, springing, as they partly did, from her reading of Rousseau, especially *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, and of Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. A reading of the Romantic elements would make it much more difficult to see her work simply as calling for equal rights, and only as the forebear of the next-generation liberal feminist thinkers such as John Stuart Mill, Harriet Taylor, and the American suffragists. Rather, it would reveal the *Rights of Woman* to be a precursor of other strands of feminism, such as that of the Transcendentalist Margaret Fuller, who like Wollstonecraft called not just for an equalization between men and women but for a transformation of the capacities of human character, male and female.

Still Together After All These Years

I have traveled a long road with Mary Wollstonecraft since I first met her in the stacks forty years ago. She pushed me always to try to understand women's lives and words in their contexts. She was my companion when I resented the gap between what I hoped to accomplish as a feminist scholar—indeed what my whole shifting community of feminist scholars was hoping to accomplish—and the glacial pace of change in incorporating women's works into the canon of what was worth studying. If she could take being a “hyena in petticoats,” I could take whatever came my way.

I was pleased that I was able to do something important for her—more important, certainly, than writing my book. I rescued her from a crime of mistaken identity. Like many writers on Mary Wollstonecraft, I stood in front of the portraits of her, most notably in the Tate Gallery and the

National Portrait Gallery. I was shocked to find no postcards of the famous portrait in the National Portrait Gallery. And then, I found them, filed under G, for “Mary Godwin.” I got the gallery to restore her proper name.

A wonderful community of Wollstonecraft scholars has tried to ensure that she is represented correctly and appropriately. There are new generations of scholars and readers who find Wollstonecraft in their own ways, and begin their own journeys with her. And there will be new generations after them. And perhaps, some time, the vision of strong-minded women that she forged will seem ordinary. But not yet.

NOTES

1. In reaching for knowledge across disciplines in those days, it helped that Leonore Davidoff was a neighbor, which is how I learned about this wonderful book.
2. Gendering words by association makes a difference. In the discussions about the cover design for *A Vindication of Political Virtue: The Political Theory of Mary Wollstonecraft*, the first—obvious—idea was to put a portrait of Wollstonecraft on the cover. But I objected to having her picture near the word “virtue,” or even the phrase “political virtue,” because I worried that people would imagine my use of “virtue” as a reference to Wollstonecraft herself, and worse, virtue in the common sense. Instead, my publisher found a wonderful line drawing of a writer’s hand of ambiguous gender. Perfect.

Appendixes

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Biographical Directory
for Wollstonecraft's
A Vindication of the Rights of Woman

MADELINE CRONIN

Augustus. *See* Octavian.

Bacon, Francis (1561–1626). English philosopher, essayist, and statesman.

He became Lord Chancellor under James I and is recognized for his major contributions to natural philosophy and scientific methodology as well as political theory. He vociferously rejected a priori reasoning in favor of induction in *Novum Organum* (1620). In *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* Wollstonecraft uses a more obscure passage from Bacon in which he suggests men of genius are more able to make great contributions to civilization if they are childless; Wollstonecraft considers the extension of this observation to women.

Barbauld, Anna Laetitia (1743–1825). Prominent female British author in her day (she was included among the female worthies listed in Mary Scott's poem "The Female Advocate"). Barbauld was educated first at home under the tutelage of her father, a schoolmaster well known in liberal intellectual circles. She then attended the Warrington Dissenting Academy and went on to publish works such as *Poems* and—in collaboration with her brother John Aikin—*Miscellaneous Pieces in Prose* (1773). In her later career she wrote increasingly political works such as *Address to the Opposers of the Repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts* (1790) and pamphlets on democracy, popular education, and the rights of women. Due to her literary accomplishments and because she had received an extensive education among men, she was invited by Elizabeth Montagu to open a Literary Academy for Ladies. However, Barbauld declined on the grounds of her conviction that conversation with men

and reading works recommended by men were paramount in women's attainment of knowledge. Barbauld's beliefs might then be compared to similar sentiments in Wollstonecraft's account of the benefits of coeducation rather than single-sex education in chapter twelve of the *Rights of Woman*. Despite the similarities in Barbauld's and Wollstonecraft's thinking about women and education, Barbauld's poem "The Rights of Woman" has often been misinterpreted as parody of Wollstonecraft's *Rights of Woman*. Wollstonecraft herself appreciated the work of Barbauld, and included several of Barbauld's pieces in her *Reader* (1789).

Burke, Edmund (1729–1797). Famed Whig politician and political philosopher with lasting influence on conservative political thought in particular. He was born in Dublin to a Catholic mother and Protestant father. After attending Trinity College, Dublin, he studied law in London.

Burke's most famous work, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), is Wollstonecraft's primary critical target in *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*. In fact, *Reflections* participated in and furthered an already heated debate over the principles and rectitude of the French Revolution. Burke was to some extent responding to the English Dissenting minister Richard Price in *Reflections*, and Wollstonecraft's *Rights of Men* was the first among several published responses to Burke in late 1790; responses from Thomas Paine, Catharine Macaulay, and Joseph Priestley, for example, soon followed.

Although the ties between Burke's philosophical writings—his aesthetics, moral philosophy, and philosophy of history—and his practical political writings are not always clear, recent scholarship has indicated that *Reflections* in particular weaves together many strands of his earlier philosophical works. For example, in 1757 Burke wrote *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, which influenced both Diderot and Kant. At this time he also contributed to an *Account of the European Settlements in America* (1757) and wrote his *Abridgment of English History*. He helped to establish, and contributed regularly to, the *Annual Register*. He also published many political pamphlets, such as *Observations on a Late Publication Entitled "The Present State of the Nation"* (1769) and "Conciliation with the Colonies" (1775).

In 1765, Burke became the private secretary to the Marquess of Rockingham, First Lord of the Treasury. Later that year, Burke was elected to the British House of Commons, where he remained (with only a brief lapse in 1780) until 1794. During that time Burke earned a reputation for excellent oratory, and for his involvement in defending the cause

of the American colonists and Irish Catholics. He was a leader in the debate over constitutional limits on the authority of the King, and he argued for the role of political parties in successfully combating royal abuse of powers. Burke's arguments in favor of conciliation with the American colonies (1775), in combination with his arguments against the French Revolution, gave him a reputation for contradictory politics.

It is clear that Burke's influence on Wollstonecraft ran deep even as she made opposing arguments about women and the family, the progress of civilization, the refinement of manners, and the spread of rights and republicanism.

Butler, Samuel (1612–1680). English poet best known for his mock-heroic narrative poem "Hudibras" (1663–1678). Butler satirized many of the religious factions involved in the English Civil War. Wollstonecraft uses his "caricature" of the Dissenters as an example of how a distorted portrait of a particular class of humans might in turn shape "their persons as well as their minds."

Catherine the Great, or Catherine II (1729–1796). Became empress of Russia after her husband, Peter III, was removed from office and assassinated. During her reign (1762–1796) the Russian empire expanded and became recognizable as one of the great European powers. Catherine was known for both her political and intellectual prowess. She was very well read, especially in French literature and political theory, and was known to have corresponded with both Voltaire and Diderot. Furthermore, she is counted as one among several eighteenth-century "enlightened despots" who attempted to wield reason to the benefit of their subjects. To this end, she drew on the writings of Montesquieu to propose large-scale reforms of the Russian legal system. She also sought to greatly expand national education.

Cerberus. In Greek mythology, the three-headed (or fifty-headed, according to some) watchdog of Hades. Cerberus could be subdued, with the music of a lyre as Orpheus did, or with cake as Aeneas did. Wollstonecraft references the Aeneas story when she describes the politician's ability to "silence Cerberus" with a sop dipped "in the milk of human kindness." A sop is a honey-soaked cake.

Cervantes, Miguel de (1547–1616). Famous Spanish novelist, playwright, and poet of the Spanish Golden Age in literature. Here Wollstonecraft refers to his canonical work *Don Quixote* (1605–1615), which is considered by some to be the first modern European novel. Using a satirical lens, this novel treats themes central to the previous literary tradition of chivalric romance, such as love, social status, and the power of imagination.

- Chapone, Hester, Mrs. (1727–1801). Self-educated author and public intellectual. She was a member of the bluestocking circle and was well acquainted with Samuel Johnson, in whose journal, *The Rambler*, she published. She was known for her writings on female conduct, and Wollstonecraft included in her *Reader* Chapone's *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind* (1773).
- Chesterfield, Philip Dormer Stanhope, 4th Earl of (1694–1773). English statesman and diplomat; of special interest to Wollstonecraft for writing *Letters to His Son* (1732–1768), in which he gives direction in etiquette that places special emphasis on social advancement. Wollstonecraft is quite critical of his writings, and in the *Rights of Woman* she deems him a “cold-hearted rascal” for pursuing conquests whose “persons” or character he had no interest in. Despite this castigation, Wollstonecraft did use one of his writings on indolence in her *Reader*.
- Cicero, Marcus Tullius (Tully) (106–43 BCE). Roman statesman, orator, lawyer, and philosopher. He devoted his life primarily to politics but was a prolific writer, especially when forced into retirement. His most famous works include *De Oratore* (On the Orator), *De re Publica* (On the Republic), and *De Officiis* (On Duties) to which Wollstonecraft refers in the *Rights of Woman*. His political writings place emphasis on the need for the philosopher-statesman to unite oratory and philosophy in the service of the common good. Cicero is central to the civic republican tradition and the most notable Roman republican.
- Cowley, Abraham (1618–1667). Poet and scholar, first at Cambridge and then Oxford. He was known for his precocious poetic contributions. For example, he wrote the romantic verse “Pyramus and Thisbe” when he was only ten years old and went on to become a distinguished writer. He became politically involved during the English Civil War by writing a satire in support of the Royalists.
- Cowper, William (1731–1800). English poet most famous for his poem “The Task” (1785), to which Wollstonecraft alludes in the *Rights of Woman*. She saw him as making serious intellectual contributions beside those of Shakespeare and Dr. Johnson, and she included his abolitionist poem “On Slavery” in her *Reader*. He also cowrote the *Olney Hymns* with the Evangelical minister John Newton (1725–1807).
- Day, Thomas (1748–1789). English philanthropist and author. His *History of Sanford and Merton* (1783–1789) utilized Rousseauian ideas about education. Wollstonecraft noted the importance of this work for moral education in the *Analytical Review*.

- Dubois, Guillaume (1656–1723). French Cardinal and politician. Among his many posts, Dubois was advisor to the Duc d'Orleans during his regency from 1715–1723. He was named secretary of foreign affairs in 1718 and in 1721 signed the Franco-Spanish Treaty and arranged the marriage of Louis XV to the Spanish Infanta.
- Eloisa, more commonly Heloise (c. 1101–1164). Common figure in literature and poetry; remembered for her tragic love affair with her tutor, the theologian Abelard. When they were separated in scandal she entered a convent and ultimately became the prioress of the convent of Argenteuil. Wollstonecraft highlights the connection between Heloise and the heroine of Rousseau's novel as indicated in his title, *Julie, ou La Nouvelle Heloise* (1761).
- Emile or Emilius. *See* Rousseau.
- Empress of Russia. *See* Catherine the Great.
- Eon de Beaumont, Charles Genevieve Timothe D' (1728–1810). French diplomat and famous transvestite. The term "eonism" in psychology comes from him. He was an accomplished politician and soldier, as well as a successful scholar and writer. Wollstonecraft includes "Madame d'Eon" among her examples of "a few women who, from having received a masculine education, have acquired courage and resolution."
- Fabricius, Gaius Luscinus (d. c. 270 BCE). Roman censor and general, cited by many as an antique exemplar of honesty and frugality. He was known for living with austerity, for refusing to accept bribes, and while serving as censor for expelling P. Cornelius Rufinus from the senate for the possession of ten pounds of silver tableware. Both Livy and Cicero mention Fabricius in connection with the virtues of honesty and integrity.
- Fordyce, Dr. James (1720–1796). Scottish minister in the Presbyterian Church and poet. He is famous for a 1766 collection of sermons entitled *Sermons for Young Women*, also known as *Fordyce's Sermons*. Wollstonecraft castigates the sentimental presentation of his precepts in the *Sermons*, which extinguish the possibility for true virtue and grace by encouraging artificial meekness in women.
- Forster, Johann Reinhold (1729–1798). Naturalist writer and publisher from Germany. His study of the Volga colonies in Russia rendered him useful to those managing British colonies and so he left Germany for London. There he taught at the Dissenting Academy at Warrington and was an active member of the Society of Antiquaries and the Society of Arts. After publishing naturalist works such as Bougainville's *Voyage Round the World* (1772) and his own *Introduction to Mineralogy* (1768)

he was invited to travel with Cook on his second voyage (1772–1775). In the wake of that trip, Forster wrote *Observations Made During a Voyage Round the World* (1778).

Gay, John (1685–1732). English poet and playwright. He was a friend and contemporary to both Swift and Pope. Wollstonecraft cites from his poem “The Tame Stag” in *Fables* (1727) to make a point about the nature of modesty rooted in reason as opposed to mere bashfulness. Gay is best known for a satirical work entitled “The Beggar’s Opera” (1728).

Genlis, Stéphanie-Félicité du Crest, Madame de (1746–1830). French writer, educator, and harpist. Her most famous work is *Les Veillées du château* (1784: *Tales of the Castle*), a set of moral stories written for young people. Wollstonecraft gives a qualified recommendation of her works, which she finds somewhat useful, but also of an especially “narrow” perspective.

Godwin, William (1756–1836). English writer known for both his novels and his political writings. He and Wollstonecraft shared many mutual friends and traveled in some of the same intellectual circles. They met for the first time in 1791, and by 1796 they became close friends and eventually lovers. When Wollstonecraft became pregnant with their daughter Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin (1797–1851), the author of *Frankenstein* (1818), they were married, although they continued to live and work in separate homes. Shortly after Wollstonecraft died from complications of childbirth, Godwin wrote a very influential biography of her, *Memoirs of the Author of “A Vindication of the Rights of Woman.”* He recorded her life in loving detail, but his efforts, especially to provide an account of her previous relationship to Gilbert Imlay and her suicide attempts, had the unintended consequence of darkening Wollstonecraft’s reputation and perpetuating an image of her as especially licentious. Opponents of women’s rights used this image of Wollstonecraft to discredit her and the women’s rights movement after her death.

Godwin and Wollstonecraft shared a rationalist political theory, but Wollstonecraft did not share his atheism or anarchism. Two of his best-known works include a political treatise, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, and its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness*, and a novel, *Things as They Are; or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams*. In *Political Justice*, Godwin defends an anarchist political theory whereby the perfectibility of humans and the power of human reason play a central part in a healthy society, while institutions such as property law and marriage are unnecessary.

Gregory, John (1724–1773). Physician and writer. He was born in Aberdeen, Scotland, to a physician and professor of medicine, James Gregory (1674–1733). Eventually John Gregory himself became a doctor and professor. After studying in Aberdeen, Edinburgh, and Leiden, where he met John Wilkes and Charles Townshend, Gregory took his first post giving lectures in medicine and in natural and moral philosophy at King's College, Aberdeen. Gregory's ideas about human nature and morality became influential among Scottish intellectuals. He believed that human nature was fixed and discoverable through scientific investigation. Furthermore, of the two principles of the human mind, reason and instinct, he believed reason to be the weaker and therefore subordinate principle. In 1766, Gregory was elected to a prestigious post as professor of the practice of physic at Edinburgh University. Of particular interest to Wollstonecraft was his pamphlet *A Father's Legacy to His Daughters* (1774). In this manual Gregory advises his daughters to cover over their rational pursuits and instead foster a set of female manners, among which delicacy, sensibility, and modesty are paramount. Wollstonecraft was highly critical of Gregory's encouraging artifice and dissimulation in place of authentic religious and moral formation.

Hervey, James (1714–1758). Anglican clergyman and devotional writer. His *Meditations and Contemplations* (1746–1747) were especially popular with significant influence in the Evangelical Revival. Hervey was the object of both extensive praise and criticism as a result of his ecstatic style of writing, which sought to combine Puritan meditation with the approach taken in *The Spectator* and in Shaftesbury's *Moralists*. Wollstonecraft uses his writings as an example of moral writings that appeal to the passions rather than to cool reason. She admits such sentimental literature is popular, but suggests that it offends good sense and taste.

Hume, David (1711–1776). Arguably the most important Anglophone philosopher and an especially important member of the Scottish Enlightenment and moral sense tradition. Although his most famous and widely read work is his philosophical *Treatise on Human Nature* (1739–1740), Hume himself believed it was inferior to his *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751). In his lifetime Hume was relatively unknown apart from those who denounced him as a skeptic and an atheist. He famously lamented that his treatise “fell dead from the press,” and he suffered the further disappointment of never attaining a much-coveted post as Chair of Ethics and Pneumatical Philosophy at Edinburgh.

However, Hume's posthumous influence is extensive. His work is considered the culmination of British empiricism; Kant notes that it was Hume who awoke him from his "dogmatic slumber"; and Charles Darwin considered Hume to be a major influence on his work. Hume's influence exceeds disciplinary divides to include philosophy, history, economics (Adam Smith was Hume's student), and cognitive science.

Wollstonecraft makes reference to his *History of England* (1754–1762) in *Vindication of the Rights of Men* and in the *Rights of Woman* she cites a long passage from "A Dialogue" in *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects* (1777). Wollstonecraft is very critical of thinkers who might make reason subject to the passions as Hume does. She explicitly attacks his view that women should be doted on and treated with gallantry because they are naturally inferior to men.

Inkle, Thomas. Fictional character well known in the eighteenth century. The popularity of the story of Inkle and Yarico (apparently first published in *A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbadoes* by Richard Ligon in 1657) indicated a rising tide of opposition to the slave trade. In a version of the story written by Richard Steele (1672–1729) in the *Spectator*, Inkle is portrayed as an especially cold-hearted trickster who sells the Indian woman who aided him, Yarico, into slavery. When she announces that she is carrying his child, he reacts by selling her at a higher price.

Johnson, Joseph (1738–1809). Radical publisher and bookseller. He not only published Wollstonecraft and encouraged her work, but was also one of her greatest friends. She called him "Little Johnson" as opposed to the moniker of the better-known Samuel Johnson, Dr. Johnson. The authors that he published include William Wordsworth, William Cowper, Anna Laetitia Barbauld, and Erasmus Darwin. He also gathered intellectuals and artists such as William Blake, Henry Fuseli, William Godwin, Joseph Priestley, and Thomas Paine for dinners in his apartment above his print shop. From 1788 to 1799 he published the *Analytical Review*.

Johnson, Samuel (1709–1784). Known as Dr. Johnson, he was a prominent London intellectual, poet, and lexicographer. His famous wit is documented by several biographers including James Boswell's biography *Life of Johnson* (1791). His major contributions include his *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755), *Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia* (1759), an edition of Shakespeare (1765), and *The Lives of the English Poets* (1777). He was the founder of the Literary Club, which included his friends Sir Joshua Reynolds and Edmund Burke. He established

the *Rambler* (1750) and was a regular contributor to the *Gentleman's Magazine*.

Juno. In Roman mythology, she was known as the queen of the heavens and wife of Jupiter. She is often portrayed as especially hot tempered and jealous—attributes which Wollstonecraft mentions in the *Rights of Woman*. She was the goddess of women and fertility, and later became associated with the Greek goddess Hera. For example, Virgil's *Aeneid* depicts Juno as a calculating and cruel goddess, perhaps relying more on the characteristics of Hera than on Juno herself.

Knox, Vicesimus (1752–1821). Writer and headmaster of Tonbridge School in Kent (1778–1812). Knox wrote essays on morality and education that became quite popular. In *Liberal Education, or, A Practical Treatise on the Method of Acquiring Useful and Polite Learning* (1781) he sought to step beyond theoretical accounts of education to provide practical advice that might guide parents in their decisions about where to send their children to school. Although Knox was a proponent of women's education, he also believed that women should receive their liberal education at home, separately from men. Wollstonecraft refers to his best-known work, *Essays Moral and Literary* (1778), in which Knox engages eighteenth-century debate on the role of sensibility in moral life. His moral ideal places emphasis on moderation and the independent possession of integrity, but also leaves room for a beneficent form of sensibility. He rejected the perversion of sensibility in the form of ostentatious affectation, instead encouraging compassionate engagement in familial, social, and political relationships. Wollstonecraft suggests that his moral ideal of temperance is at odds with his practical advice that women should receive a separate education from men.

Leibnitz, Gottfried Wilhelm (1646–1716). Deemed a universal genius, he was a German scholar and politician who made significant contributions to mathematics, physics, jurisprudence, history, and philosophy. He discovered a method of calculus independent of Newton and developed a form of mathematical notation that remains in use. His major philosophical work, *Essai de Theodicée* (1710), refutes Pierre Bayle's conception of God in favor of a definition of God as "infinite possibility." Leibnitz asserted that the universe was fundamentally harmonious and that its basic units, monads, were self-contained parts of a hierarchical order under God.

Locke, John (1632–1704). English political philosopher whose writings had a profound impact on both modern philosophy and politics. His *Two Treatises of Government* exerted a major influence on the American

Founding generation, and his thought is explicit in the American Declaration of Independence. Locke also made major contributions to empiricism and philosophy of the mind with his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) and *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693). Wollstonecraft was heavily influenced by all of Locke's work. For example, she both accepts and is critical of several of his prescriptions for early education. She draws upon Locke for her own empiricism and sense of the formative importance of the early association of ideas for young people.

Louis (Lewis) XVI (1754–1793). King of France (1774–1792). In 1770 he married Marie Antoinette, the Austrian archduchess, and in 1774 when a period of widespread public dissatisfaction was already under way, he inherited the French crown from his grandfather, Louis XV. A notoriously weak leader, he made several failed attempts to meet popular demand for reform. Massive public debt forced him to convene the States-General in May 1789 in order to raise tax revenue. In part as a result of the king's indecisiveness regarding the composition of the States-General, the third (popular) estate declared themselves an independent National Assembly, thereby signaling the beginning of the French Revolution. Suspicions that the king intended to suppress the National Assembly led to the storming of the Bastille on July 14, and by October 1789 the royal family was forced into confinement at the Tuileries Palace. They then attempted, and failed, to flee France in June 1791. Louis XVI was put on trial for treason under the newly formed republic, found guilty, and guillotined on January 21, 1793.

Lucretia. According to Roman legend, most famously recorded in Livy, the foundation of the Roman Republic was an indirect result of her rape and consequent suicide. After suffering rape by the son of the king, Sextus Tarquin, Lucretia informed her father of the crime then killed herself to prove that it was in fact rape and not adultery. This outrage ultimately led to the expulsion of the Tarquins from Rome and the establishment of republican Rome.

Macaulay, Catharine (1731–1791). Historian and political writer best known for her republican *History of England* (1763–1783). She earned a reputation as a radical, especially after she wrote her critical *Observations* in reply to Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* in 1790. Wollstonecraft and Macaulay were mutual admirers of one another's work; for example, Macaulay's *Letters on Education* (1790) was an important source for Wollstonecraft. Likewise, when Macaulay discovered that a woman had written *Rights of Men*, she praised Woll-

stonecraft's contribution as a testament to the "powers and talents" of her sex. In the *Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft celebrates Macaulay's style of writing in which sound judgment is exhibited and in which "no sex appears."

Milton, John (1608–1674). Poet and polemicist. He was compelled by political and religious turmoil in England to write in defense of religious toleration and freedom of the press, in *Areopagitica* (1644) for example. With the establishment of the English Commonwealth, Milton was enlisted to serve its Council of State, primarily as a political writer but also as a diplomat. He wrote extensive defenses of the Commonwealth in both English and Latin. Initially Milton also put his rhetorical support behind Cromwell's Protectorate, but ultimately became dissatisfied with his ecclesiastical and monarchical inclinations. Milton's greatest work, *Paradise Lost*, was written at the end of his career, during which time he was entirely blind. Wollstonecraft criticizes and relies heavily on passages from *Paradise Lost* in the *Rights of Woman*. She reveals the inconsistent messages about the status of men and women as God's creation in this epic poem. She is, above all, interested in taking the rational core of Milton's writings while leaving behind what she sees as sensual reveries.

Monboddoo, James Burnett, Lord (1714–1799). Scottish judge, philosopher, and anthropologist. He wrote *Of the Origin and Progress of Language* (1773–1792) and *Ancient Metaphysics* (1779–1799), and some credit him with anticipating Darwin's theory of evolution. Monboddoo was popularly known for his discussions of the orangutan, an animal in which yet unrefined intelligence was manifest and which he believed represented "the infantine state of our species." Wollstonecraft draws on this theme in his work by citing him in discussions of reason as the God-given "power of improvement."

Moses (c. 14th–13th centuries BCE). Hebrew prophet who led the Israelites out of Egypt and received the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. In her account of a proper sense of modesty, Wollstonecraft suggests that Jesus is the model of modesty, while Moses falls short of this, being a "humble man" because he was too "timid" to recognize his own merit. This might refer to Moses' first reception of the voice of God. In the story of the burning bush (Exodus 3:1–21) Moses hides his face and argues that he did not have the eloquence to speak for the Israelites (Moses is believed to have had a speech impediment).

Muhammad (Mahomet) (c. 570–632). The prophet of Islam. He was born in Mecca, where his father, Abdullah, was a member of a noble family

of the Quraysh “tribe” and the Bani-Hashim clan. Muhammad’s father died shortly before he was born and his mother died when Muhammad was six. Therefore Muhammad was raised by his uncle’s family. As a young man he worked as a shepherd and merchant. He gained a reputation as an especially trustworthy merchant, and at this time met and married his wife Khadija, a wealthy widow. It was not until he was forty years old that Muhammad had his first prophetic mission. In 610 he fled Mecca to meditate and reflect in nearby mountains. While he stayed there, in a cave on the mountain, he received his first revelation from God, and from this point the Qur’an was revealed to the Prophet over the course of twenty-three years.

Newton, Isaac (1642–1727). Revolutionary mathematician and physicist.

He is one of the greatest natural philosophers in history and made major contributions to astronomy, mechanics, optics, alchemy, and theology. He invented calculus almost ten years before Leibniz did so independently, although Leibniz has had more influence on contemporary calculus. His masterpiece is *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica* in which he gives his principle of inertia, three laws of motion, and a new concept of mass. Wollstonecraft deems him a genius of such extraordinary talent that he “was probably a being of a superior order, accidentally caged in a human body,” a condition which resembles that of woman whose yet unrealized capabilities are hidden from view.

Octavian, later Augustus (63 BCE–14 CE). Augustus was the first Roman Emperor. He was born Gaius Octavius—Octavian—but became Augustus in 27 BCE. Octavian was adopted by his great-uncle Julius Caesar according to the terms of his last will, which ultimately allowed him to attain supreme authority in Rome after defeating his competitors. After the assassination of Caesar, in 44 BCE, Octavian formed the Second Triumvirate with Mark Antony and Marcus Lepidus. Initially they divided the Roman Republic into three parts and shared rule over it. However, competition among them resulted first in the exiling of Marcus Lepidus, and then Octavian’s defeating Marc Anthony. Octavian was able to undermine Antony in part by using Antony’s relationship with the Queen of Egypt, Cleopatra, against him, and then by winning a major naval victory at the Battle of Actium, after which Antony and Cleopatra committed suicide.

Piozzi, Hester Lynch (1741–1821). British writer. She was a close friend of Samuel Johnson, who lived with her and her first husband, Henry Thrale, for a span of several years. However, when Hester remarried and became Hester Piozzi, she and Johnson became estranged. Piozzi me-

morialized Dr. Johnson in *Anecdotes of the Late Samuel Johnson* (1786) and *Letters to and from the Late Samuel Johnson* (1788). Wollstonecraft cites a passage from the later work as indicative of Piozzi's adoption of the very sentiments that "brutalize" her sex.

- Pope, Alexander (1688–1744). Famous English poet of the Augustan period. He is well known for his translations of Homer's *Iliad* (1715–1720) and *Odyssey* (1725–1726), his *Pastorals* (1709), satiric works such as *The Rape of the Lock* (1714), and for perfecting the heroic couplet. Wollstonecraft makes explicit reference to *An Essay on Criticism* (1711) and *An Essay on Man* (1733–1724), which are known as his more philosophically grounded social critiques. Wollstonecraft also identifies and is critical of Pope's depiction of women in *Of the Characters of Women: An Epistle to a Lady* (1735).
- Price, Dr. Richard (1723–1791). English dissenting minister, political writer, and moral philosopher. He engaged Hutcheson and Hume in a 1758 work entitled *A Review of the Principal Questions in Morals*. Here he defends a rationalist position against Hutcheson's moral sense philosophy and Hume's grounding of morals in the passions. Wollstonecraft encountered him and his ideas when she was living in Newington Green and attended his sermons. The influence of Price's moral and political thought on Wollstonecraft especially appears in the *Rights of Men* and the *Rights of Woman*. Price was a friend and philosophical opponent of Joseph Priestley. He was also a friend of Benjamin Franklin and wrote works in defense of both the American and French Revolutions, which made him a target of Edmund Burke's criticism in *Reflections on the Revolution in France*.
- Priestley, Joseph (1733–1804). Leading member of the British Enlightenment known especially for his contributions to science and theology, as well as moral, political, and natural philosophy. He was a committed utilitarian and his works attempt to incorporate both theist and materialist strands of thought. Priestley first became a controversial figure on the basis of his proposals for parliamentary reform in favor of a separation between church and state. His support for the French Revolution, as seen in his reply to Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, only added to his status as an inflammatory figure. He was therefore one of the first targets of anti-Enlightenment sentiment in reaction to the French Revolution. In 1791, his home and laboratory were destroyed; he then fled to the United States in 1794.
- Rebekah, or Rebecca (c. 19th century BCE). In the Old Testament, the wife of Isaac. Their sons were Jacob and Esau. Wollstonecraft uses

Rebekah as an example of mothers whose affection for her children was “brutish.” Her suggestion that women like Rebekah “violate their most sacred duties” for the sake of their children might be a reference to Rebekah’s aiding Jacob in his scheme to cheat his idolatrous brother, Esau, out of his inheritance.

Richardson, Samuel (1689–1761). English novelist. He is known for perfecting the epistolary novel. His first novel, *Pamela* (1740), became immediately popular. Two later novels, *Clarissa* (1748) and *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753), were also well received. Wollstonecraft uses two of Richardson’s most famous characters, Clarissa and Lovelace, to criticize Richardson’s portrayal of women as helpless to exercise and maintain their own honor and virtue.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques (1712–1778). Pivotal Enlightenment political theorist, philosopher, novelist, and musical composer. He was one of Wollstonecraft’s most important intellectual influences. She was highly critical of Rousseau’s failure to extend to women the same educational measures that he outlined for the male protagonist of his *Emile, or On Education* (1762). *Emile* was widely read and influential among educational theorists in the eighteenth century. In it Emile’s tutor contrives a series of schemes intended to provide his charge with a negative education—an education intended to preserve the student’s natural goodness as he learns to pursue his self-preservation, and only then to enter society without becoming the slave of public opinion out of *amour-propre* (self-love dependent on the opinions of others). Wollstonecraft’s own philosophy of education shares Rousseau’s endorsement of a mother’s breast-feeding her children, emphasis on the students’ autonomous involvement in their own education, and attention to the importance of physical play for a liberating education.

Although Wollstonecraft addresses *Emile* explicitly in the *Rights of Woman*, she also engages many of Rousseau’s other works in that work and elsewhere. Rousseau’s first major work was published in 1750 after it won the prize from the Academy of Dijon for answering the question, Have the arts and sciences contributed to the refinement of morals? In *Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts* or *First Discourse* (1750), Rousseau is highly critical of the effect that the progress of civilization and advancement in the arts and sciences have had on morals. In the *Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft also appears to be interested in refuting several of Rousseau’s claims in this work. Rousseau wrote *A Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* or *Second Discourse* in 1755, which treats one of the central questions in Rousseau’s work: how hu-

man interdependence in society threatens human freedom and natural goodness. In addition to these more philosophical writings, Rousseau explicitly sought a popular audience through his literary writings, such as his romantic novel *Julie, or the New Heloise* (1761), which was a hugely popular best seller at the time. In political theory one of Rousseau's most influential ideas, that of the general will, is articulated in *The Social Contract* (1762). At the end of his career, Rousseau also wrote several important autobiographical works including *The Confessions* (1764–1766) and *Reveries of the Solitary Walker* (1776–1778).

Sappho (c. 625–570 BCE). Greek lyric poet. Born on the island of Lesbos, she is the most famous of several female poets from Lesbos who wrote at that time. Her poetry is marked by an emotional intensity and by themes of passionate love and appreciation of beauty.

Sidney, Philip (1554–1586). Model of the courtier and gentleman in the English Renaissance. He was a poet, diplomat, soldier, and courtier. Wollstonecraft quotes his *Arcadia* (1590), a pastoral prose romance, which also included poetry.

Solomon (c. 985–c. 925 BCE). Son of David and King of Israel c. 970–c. 925 BCE. He rebuilt Jerusalem and established the first Hebrew temple there. He is, throughout history and literature, portrayed as especially wise.

Smith, Adam (1723–1790). Philosopher and economic theorist. He was a member of the Scottish Enlightenment and student of David Hume. His best known works include *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), in which he refuted the claims of mercantilist political economy, and *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759). Wollstonecraft cites Smith, but is also critical of his version of moral sense philosophy as articulated in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*.

Swedenborg, Emanuel (1688–1772). Swedish scientist, mathematician, and theologian. On the basis of several mystical experiences he developed a religious system known as Swedenborgianism, which combined elements of Christianity, pantheism, and theosophy. Wollstonecraft counts him and Rousseau among those “specious reasoners” who perpetuate an “abject” portrait of “an accomplished woman” who has charms, but no moral vigor. Wollstonecraft read and reviewed his *On Marriages in Heaven; and On the Nature of Heavenly Conjugal Love* (1789).

Swift, Jonathan (1667–1745). Also known as Dean Swift. This great Irish poet and satirist is best known for works such as *A Journal to Stella* (1710–1713), *Drapier's Letter* (1724), and *A Modest Proposal* (1729). *The Rights of Woman* uses as examples characters from Swift's most

famous work, *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), and also appears to pay rhetorical homage to the dark wit of *A Modest Proposal* in critiquing the disenfranchisement of working-class men.

Talleyrand-Périgord, Charles Maurice de (1754–1838). French politician and diplomat. Wollstonecraft dedicated the *Rights of Woman* to Talleyrand, who published *Report on Public Education* in 1791. In this work Talleyrand defends the importance of education for all people. He is explicit that this should include both sexes, and even includes a proposal for poor orphan girls to be educated by the state to prevent their entry into prostitution. However, he suggests that women and men should be educated separately and perhaps be taught on the basis of different principles. As he does not outline the specific contents of female education, Wollstonecraft moves beyond him to apply the revolutionary principles of freedom and equality in defending a universal human right to primary education supported by the state in chapter twelve of the *Rights of Woman*.

Talleyrand had an extensive political career before and after the French Revolution. He was ordained by the Catholic Church in 1775 and became the Bishop of Autun in 1788. He represented the clergy in the Estates-General of 1789, during which he advocated for the confiscation of church property. He was excommunicated in 1791, and he remained in exile from France in Britain and the United States from 1792 to 1796. Upon his return to France he was made minister of foreign affairs (1797) and served as the grand chamberlain to Napoleon in 1804. Ultimately Talleyrand opposed Napoleon, represented France at the Congress of Vienna, and helped to restore the Bourbons after Napoleon's fall from power.

Telemachus. In Homer's *Odyssey*, the son of Odysseus and Penelope. In Rousseau's *Emile*, the tutor treats Telemachus as a paragon of virtue and has both Sophie and Emile read François Fénelon's novel, *Telemachus* (1699). Sophie falls in love with the character and Emile carries the novel with him on his travels.

Tully. See Cicero.

Washington, George (1732–1799). Commander of the Continental Army during the American Revolutionary War and first president of the United States. Wollstonecraft celebrates General Washington's modesty and uses his greatness to illustrate a distinction between a modest man "conscious of his own strength" and a man too humble to accept the "command of the American forces." She also praises him, along with

Fabricius (see entry), for embodying especially republican virtues, living out his civic duties both as a general and as a private farmer.

Young, Edward (1683–1765). English clergyman, poet, and dramatist. He wrote several famous tragic plays, notably *Bursis*, *King of Egypt* (1719) and *The Revenge* (1721), with which Wollstonecraft was familiar. He wrote a famous collection of poems, *The Complaint, or Night Thoughts* (1742–1745), which led to the formation of the “graveyard school” of poets.

The Life and Times of Wollstonecraft and Her Family, 1688–1818

MADLINE CRONIN AND EILEEN HUNT BOTTING

Dates in *italics* are for events in Wollstonecraft's life.

- 1688–1689 The English Bill of Rights establishes the constitutional supremacy of the Parliament over the monarchy, as a response to the Glorious Revolution and the other seventeenth-century European wars of religion.
The Toleration Act expands religious toleration in England and its colonies for non-Anglican Christian Dissenters except for Roman Catholics and non-trinitarians.
- 1707 England and Scotland are united as the Kingdom of Great Britain.
Religious toleration is guaranteed for Presbyterians in England due to the unification with Scotland.
- 1708 The Dissenter church at Newington Green, in north London, is established in the Presbyterian tradition.
- 1754–1763 Britain and France engage in the French and Indian War and the Seven Years' War in Europe, the Americas, coastal Africa, and the South Pacific—dangerously escalating their national debts alongside their imperial ambitions.
- 1759 On April 27, Mary Wollstonecraft is born in Spitalfields, east London, to middle-class Anglican parents: the Englishman John Edward Wollstonecraft and the Irishwoman Elizabeth Dickson Wollstonecraft.
- 1762 Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Social Contract* and *Emile, or On Education* are published.
- 1768 Wollstonecraft's family moves to Yorkshire where she befriends her peer Jane Arden, and benefits from informal

higher education from Arden's father, a Dissenting Christian and scientific lecturer.

- 1775 After a 1774 move to London, Wollstonecraft initiates a transformative intellectual friendship with her peer, the botanical illustrator Fanny Blood.
- 1776 The American colonies issue their Declaration of Independence from Britain.
- 1778 Wollstonecraft takes a job as the companion of Mrs. Dawson in Bath, while her family moves to Enfield.
- 1782 The death of Wollstonecraft's mother marks a transition in the life of her family. Mary goes to live with the Bloods; Mary's sister, Eliza, marries Meredith Bishop; and Mr. Wollstonecraft remarries and moves to Laugharne.
- 1784 Eliza Wollstonecraft suffers a nervous breakdown. Mary, her sister Everina, and Fanny Blood decide to intervene. Mary runs away with Eliza to Hackney. Eliza's baby is left behind, due to the patriarchal marriage and child custody laws of the time. The baby dies of illness soon thereafter.

Mary, Eliza, and Fanny attempt to make a living together. They first seek to establish a school at Islington, but to avoid competition from other schools in the area they determine to move to and start a school in Newington Green. The historical record indicates it was a successful coeducational day school run by the three women with the aid of a Dissenting minister, the Presbyterian turned Unitarian James Burgh, and his wife Hannah.

At Newington Green, Wollstonecraft attends the sermons of the Dissenting minister and abolitionist Richard Price, which deeply shape her evolving radical political perspective.

Wollstonecraft also meets the radical Joseph Johnson, who is later to become her publisher.

- 1785 Fanny Blood moves to Lisbon, Portugal, to marry Hugh Skeys. Wollstonecraft follows about nine months later to help care for Fanny, who soon dies as a result of childbirth.
- 1786 Wollstonecraft writes her educational treatise, *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*.

The Newington Green school closes. Wollstonecraft's absence while in Portugal may have contributed to its collapse.

1787 Wollstonecraft moves to Mitchelstown, Ireland, to become a governess for the Kingsborough family. *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* and "On Poetry" published in London.

Wollstonecraft travels to Dublin and Bristol with the Kingsboroughs before they dismiss her for unknown reasons.

1787 Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade founded in London.

The U.S. Constitution adopted, replacing the original post-revolutionary Articles of Confederation.

1788 Wollstonecraft's autobiographical novel, *Mary, a Fiction*, is published in London.

Wollstonecraft's didactic children's book *Original Stories from Real Life* and her translation of French finance minister Jacques Necker's *Of the Importance of Religious Opinions* are published in London.

Joseph Johnson invites Wollstonecraft to write book reviews for the *Analytical Review*.

1789 The French Revolution begins.

The French National Assembly adopts the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen on August 26.

On October 5 and 6, poor women from Paris march to Versailles to protest the cost of bread before King Louis XVI and Queen Marie Antoinette.

1789 Wollstonecraft's literary miscellany *The Female Reader* is published in London.

1790 Wollstonecraft becomes the editorial assistant of the *Analytical Review*.

Her loose translations of children's books—Maria de Cambon's *Young Grandison* and Christian Salzmann's *Elements of Morality*—are published in London.

1790 On November 1, Edmund Burke publishes *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, a strident critique of the French Revolution.

1790 On November 29, Wollstonecraft anonymously publishes the first direct response to Burke's *Reflections*, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*.

1791 France's National Assembly adopts its first republican constitution, with the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen as its preamble.

Former Catholic Bishop turned French revolutionary Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord publishes his *Report on Public Education*, which briefly raises the issue of girls' and women's rights to education and formal citizenship in the new French republic.

The Bill of Rights—with the first amendment prohibiting an established religion and guaranteeing individual rights to speech, press, association, petition, religious practice, and conscience—is ratified by the United States.

Olympe de Gouges publishes her pamphlet "Declaration of the Rights of Woman and Citizen" in Paris.

1791 Wollstonecraft starts writing her first book-length work of political philosophy, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, dedicating it to Talleyrand-Périgord.

She meets William Godwin for the first time at a dinner party including members of the intellectual circle surrounding Joseph Johnson. Another member of this circle, the poet William Blake, illustrates the second edition of *Original Stories*.

1792 William Wilberforce leads the massive petition movement in the British House of Commons for the abolition of the slave trade.

France passes an egalitarian divorce law, granting the right to no-fault divorce for women and men.

1792 An instant international success, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* is published in London, Paris, Lyon, Boston, and Philadelphia.

Wollstonecraft moves to Paris, in support of the revolutionary cause, at the end of the year.

1793 The radical stage of the French Revolution intensifies with the Terror and its public executions of political enemies to Robespierre's regime.

Louis XVI, Queen Marie Antoinette, and Olympe de Gouges are guillotined.

Godwin publishes his radical anarchist philosophical treatise *Political Justice* in London.

- 1793 In Paris, Wollstonecraft initiates a romantic relationship with the American Gilbert Imlay.
Imlay registers her as his wife at the U.S. embassy in Paris, though they are not formally married, to ensure her security as a British expatriate in enemy territory.
Wollstonecraft becomes pregnant. Imlay then leaves for business in Le Havre, in northwestern coastal France.
- 1794 Wollstonecraft follows Imlay to Le Havre, where her daughter Fanny Imlay (later Fanny Imlay Godwin) is born.
Imlay returns to Paris, followed by Wollstonecraft and Fanny shortly thereafter.
Wollstonecraft's philosophical history of the early, liberal stage of the French Revolution, *An Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution*, is published in London.
- 1795 The Directory takes power in France.
- 1795 Wollstonecraft and Fanny follow Imlay to London. Wollstonecraft learns of Imlay's infidelity, then attempts suicide by overdose of laudanum before Imlay intervenes.
During the summer months, Wollstonecraft and Fanny travel to Scandinavia on business for Imlay.
After learning of Imlay's continued infidelity upon her return to London, Wollstonecraft attempts suicide for a second time by jumping from Putney Bridge into the frigid river Thames.
She recovers by writing a Romantic travel memoir of her journey through Scandinavia, which has as its subtext the dissolution of her romantic relationship with Imlay.
- 1796 Wollstonecraft's *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* is published in London.
She meets Godwin again in April, who was captivated by her *Letters Written during a Short Residence*. They visit each other and eventually become lovers.
Wollstonecraft makes a final break with Imlay.
Wollstonecraft begins work on her feminist gothic novel, *Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman*.
- 1797 Because of her unplanned pregnancy, Wollstonecraft and Godwin choose to formally marry in March despite their previous public criticisms of the patriarchal institu-

tion of marriage as a kind of legal prostitution. Because Godwin was even more radical in his public critique of marriage than Wollstonecraft, he faced a distinct charge of hypocrisy.

- 1798 On September 10, Wollstonecraft dies from an infection soon after giving birth to their daughter, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin (later Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin Shelley). Godwin publishes *Memoirs of the Author of "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman"* and the *Posthumous Works of Mary Wollstonecraft* in London.

These two volumes, including Wollstonecraft's passionate love letters to Imlay, are soon issued across the United States and continental Europe.

Godwin's editorial transparency about Wollstonecraft's love life before their marriage unfortunately coincides with the apex of anti-Jacobin politics in Britain and the United States. Anti-revolutionary thinkers, with particular fervor in Britain, seize upon the chance to use her life as a morality tale that illustrates the dangers of radical political ideas such as women's rights.

- 1799 Napoleon overthrows the Directory.
1800 Napoleon becomes the First Consul, and then Emperor, of France.

The French Civil Code is established, limiting women's rights to divorce, property, and public speech and association.

- 1803 The Napoleonic Wars commence, with Britain declaring war with France.
1815 The states that defeated Napoleon hold the Congress of Vienna, redrawing the borders of Europe and condemning the slave trade. Talleyrand-Périgord represents France.
1816 Fanny Imlay Godwin commits suicide, feeling abandoned in the wake of her sister Mary's elopement to Europe with the poet Percy Shelley.

- 1817 Soon after their marriage, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin Shelley and Percy Shelley publish their Romantic travel memoir of their elopement, *History of a Six Weeks' Tour*, which alludes to the *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* as an inspiration.

- 1818 Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin Shelley publishes her masterpiece of speculative fiction on the transformation of human nature in times of intellectual and social experimentation, *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus*. This most famous of gothic novels engages the themes of Rousseau, Godwin, and Wollstonecraft's philosophies against the backdrop of the post-revolutionary political landscape.

A Vindication of the Rights of Woman
within the Women's Human Rights
Tradition, 1739–2015

EILEEN HUNT BOTTING AND MADELINE CRONIN

- 1739 “Sophia, a Person of Quality” pushes the language of rights into the forefront of the European *querelle des femmes* with the publication of *Woman not inferior to man: or, A short and modest Vindication of the natural Right of the Fair-Sex to a perfect Equality of Power, Dignity, and Esteem, with the Men* in London.
- 1790 The French philosopher and politician Condorcet defends women's full and formal inclusion in citizenship in the revolutionary republic in his essay *On the Admission of Women to the Rights of Citizenship*.
- 1791 Frenchwoman Olympe de Gouges publishes her essay *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and Citizen* in critical response to the omission of women's rights from the 1789 French *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*.
- 1792 Publication of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in London, Paris, Lyon, Boston, and Philadelphia.
Second edition of the *Rights of Woman* published in London, as revised and approved by Wollstonecraft.
The French edition of the *Rights of Woman* is reviewed by Julian de Velasco in Madrid, Spain.
- 1793 *Rights of Woman* published in Dublin. The first German edition is introduced by the progressive educator and friend of Wollstonecraft, Christian Salzmann—conservatively emphasizing the value of women's improved education for husbands.
- 1794 Matthew Carey reprints the *Rights of Woman* twice in Philadelphia.

- 1794 “Rosa California, Countess of Rome” publishes *A Brief Defense of the Rights of Women* in Assisi.
- 1795 Immanuel Kant’s essay “Perpetual Peace” imagines a world federation of republics united in respect for the intrinsic value and individual rights of human beings.
- 1796 Third London edition of the *Rights of Woman* published, with revisions unapproved by the author.
The German edition of the *Rights of Woman* is translated into Dutch.
- c. 1800 More copies of Wollstonecraft’s *Rights of Woman* than Paine’s *Rights of Man* are in the personal libraries of Americans.
- 1801 In Denmark, Jørgen Borch translates the German edition of the *Rights of Woman* into Danish, with a similarly conservative introduction as Salzmann’s, plus a pink ribbon and satin binding.
- 1804 Signifying a post-revolutionary backlash against the women’s human rights discourse that flourished in the 1790s, the Parisian editors of *La Décade Philosophique et Littéraire* position Wollstonecraft against more conservative female authors such as Bernier.
- 1818 In Boston, Hannah Mather Crocker publishes the first book-length philosophical treatise on women’s human rights by an American. Her *Observations on the Real Rights of Women* engages and quotes Wollstonecraft’s *Rights of Woman*.
- 1826 In Paris, M. César Gardeton produces the first “fake” edition of the *Rights of Woman*. Presumably to sell copies, he misattributes Wollstonecraft (“Mistriss Godwin”) as the author of his *The Rights of Women and the Injustice of Men*. It is actually a pirated copy of a French edition of Sophia’s 1739 *Woman not inferior to man*.
- 1830s In Rio de Janeiro, educator Nísia Floresta unwittingly translates Gardeton’s “fake” edition of the *Rights of Woman*. The Portuguese text is printed three times across Brazil, making Wollstonecraft’s name well known there. Floresta’s introduction to the text, promoting the education of girls, is one of the founding documents of Brazilian feminism.
- 1833 *Rights of Woman* reprinted in New York.
- 1840 World’s Anti-Slavery Convention in London. Americans Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton meet there, discuss

Wollstonecraft and the exclusion of women from public speech at the convention, and decide to promote the rights of women as part of their commitment to abolition and human rights in general.

- 1841 *Rights of Woman* reprinted in London.
- 1844 *Rights of Woman* reprinted in London.
- 1845 *Rights of Woman* reprinted in New York.
- 1848 The Seneca Falls Women's Rights Convention occurs in July in upstate New York, led by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Quaker minister Lucretia Mott. It produces the "Declaration of Sentiments," which revises the language of the 1776 U.S. Declaration of Independence to include women: "all women and men are created equal" and are "endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights."
- 1848 Mathilde Franziska Anneke, a women's rights advocate from Cologne, devotes three issues of her women's newspaper, *Frauen-Zeitung*, to printing her German translation of the *Rights of Woman*.
- 1850 First National Women's Rights Convention in Worcester, Massachusetts, organized by Lucy Stone.
- 1851 Responding to the recent U.S. women's rights conventions, Englishwoman Harriet Taylor publishes her essay "The Enfranchisement of Women" in London.
- 1856 *Rights of Woman* reprinted in New York.
- 1860s Women's movements for access to male-only university programs, especially in medicine, gain steam in Russia, Chile, and England.
- 1867 Member of Parliament John Stuart Mill represents a petition for women's suffrage, signed by thousands of women, in the British House of Commons.
- 1868 In New York, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony reprint the entire *Rights of Woman* in their feminist newspaper *The Revolution*, as part of their unsuccessful campaign to include women's suffrage in the post-Civil War amendments to the U.S. Constitution.
- 1869 An instant international success, John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women*—defending women's entitlement to the same rights as men on the basis of their shared humanity—is published in six languages, eight countries, and twelve editions or printings.

- 1878 First International Congress on Women's Rights, Paris.
- 1890–96 *Rights of Woman* printed in English six times for its centennial, in London and New York. British women's suffragist Millicent Fawcett, the American biographer of Wollstonecraft Elizabeth Robins Pennell in Budapest, and the colonial South African feminist Olive Schreiner are commissioned to write introductory essays for the new English editions—with Schreiner's remaining unfinished in manuscript form.
- 1893 New Zealand is the first self-governing country to grant suffrage to women at the national level.
- 1898 A recent PhD from the University of Bern, Emma Rauschenbusch-Clough, publishes the first doctoral dissertation and book on the philosophy of Wollstonecraft, focusing on the *Rights of Woman* and tracing its reception in Germany.
- 1899 Bertha Pappenheim, the leader of the Jewish women's movement in Germany at the turn of the century, produces the second German translation of *Rights of Woman*, published in Dresden and Leipzig.
- 1901 A recent PhD from the University of Buenos Aires, Elvira Lopez, publishes her dissertation *The Feminist Movement* in Argentina. The book assesses contemporary debates on women's issues across Europe, British India, Australia, Africa, and Latin America, with a chapter devoted to Argentina. Lopez traces the historical roots of international fin de siècle feminism, describing England as the origin of "La idea feminista." She cites Saint Thomas More, Mary Astell, and, with greatest emphasis, Wollstonecraft and her Quaker and abolitionist followers in the United States as the crucial philosophical developers of the Anglo origins of the now global idea of feminism.
- 1904 Czech edition of *Rights of Woman* published in Prague, translated and introduced by Anna Holmová.
- 1914–17 Many women's movements put their campaigns on hold during World War I, or become active in the peace cause.
- 1929 Wollstonecraft's *Rights of Woman* and Mill's *Subjection of Women* bound together in the globally published Everyman edition.

English novelist Virginia Woolf concludes her essay on Mary Wollstonecraft with a positive assessment of her influ-

ence: “we hear her voice and trace her influence even now among the living.”

- 1945 World War II ends. There is a postwar rise of women's enfranchisement around the globe, as there was after World War I.
- 1946 The United Nations' Commission on the Status of Women is founded to establish international standards for women's rights.
- 1948 The United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes “the equal rights of men and women.”
- 1963 Smith College graduate Betty Friedan cites Wollstonecraft in her influential second-wave American feminist text *The Feminine Mystique*.
- 1966 In her “Statement of Purpose for the National Organization for Women,” Betty Friedan calls for a renewed attention “to the proposition that women, first and foremost, are human beings, who, like all other people in our society, must have the chance to develop their fullest human potential.”
- 1975 First United Nations' World Conference on Women in Mexico City.
- 1977 Italian and Spanish editions of the *Rights of Woman*.
- 1979 Adoption of the only international treaty on women's human rights—Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)—by the General Assembly of the United Nations.
- 1980 Japanese edition of the *Rights of Woman*.
- 1989 Collected works of Wollstonecraft edited and published by Marilyn Butler and Janet Todd.
- The United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child includes universal primary education and physical education among the rights equally belonging to girls and boys.
- GABRIELA women's coalition in Philippines uses slogan “women's rights are human rights,” inspiring American Charlotte Bunch to follow suit in her United Nations–oriented human rights activism for women.
- 1992 The *Rights of Woman* printed in several English-language editions, including a new Indian edition published in Bombay, for its bicentennial.
- 1993 Slovenian edition of the *Rights of Woman* published during the ongoing Yugoslav Wars and two years after Slovenian independence.

The United Nations' World Conference on Human Rights produces the Vienna Declaration, which uses the term "human rights of women" in two interrelated ways. First, women's shared rights with men—such as nourishment, safety, and education—and women's entitlement to equal access to these human rights, without gender discrimination; and second, women's rights as human beings to be free from "gender-specific abuses" such as "murder, systematic rape, sexual slavery, and forced pregnancy," as was tragically prevalent in "situations of armed conflict."

- 1994 Serbian edition of the *Rights of Woman* published during the Kosovo War.
- 1995 Chinese translation of 1929 Everyman edition of *Rights of Woman* and *Subjection of Women* published in Beijing.
- United Nations' Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. U.S. First Lady Hillary Clinton delivers address entitled "Women's Rights are Human Rights." Conference generates global Platform for Action for women's equality, empowerment, and justice.
- 1997 Swedish edition of the *Rights of Woman*.
- 1999 Indian economist and Nobel laureate Amartya Sen links Wollstonecraft to his theory of women's human rights to "free agency" and "well-being" in his *Development as Freedom*.
- 2000 The United Nations' Millennium Development Goals set as top development priorities for the world the rights of girls and women in extreme poverty to improved health, education, and empowerment.
- 2007 Turkish edition of the *Rights of Woman*.
- 2008 United Nations Security Council Resolution 1820 recognizes sexual violence as a potential war crime, crime against humanity, or act of genocide. Such violations of women's human rights demand protection for the victims, plus preventative measures such as the incorporation of women into peace processes.
- 2010 UN Women established to tie together the disparate groups within the United Nations that work on women's human rights and development issues.
- 2011 The Arab Uprisings, some mobilized by women such as Nobel Peace Prize winner Tawakul Karman of Yemen, assert

the human rights of women within Islamic governments and Muslim cultures.

- 2012 UN Women reports progress in promoting gender equity in primary education in developing countries, yet, globally, ten million more girls than boys are out of primary school.
- 2015 Women in Saudi Arabia are slated to vote in municipal elections for the first time.

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