

CHAPTER III.

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL GIFT OF GOD.
ARE WESTERN WOMEN LACKING IN
DELICACY?

PLAIN SPEAKING seems to be one of the characteristics of the present day. There are no "closed books" for girls, even of fifteen or sixteen years of age. They simply know everything there is to know, and therefore they have nothing to find out. They will talk about maternity and what to do with the baby in the embryonic and the teething stage, and give you their opinion on the Malthusian principles and the proper way to stamp out contagious diseases in the Army. I have met many such women; for the most part they are unmarried, and their ages range from the earliest maidenhood to that advanced and highly experienced spinsterhood which is capable of advising the most matronly mother exactly what to do with the baby before and after birth. All such maiden ladies claim a very wide knowledge of sex relationship, and if you suggest that some of their statements are perhaps just a little bit advanced or—not to put too fine a point on it—indelicately, they do not hesitate to dub you "Early Victorian." Sometimes it has occurred to me, as a plain Englishman with sons who will some day have to be provided with wives, that a little return to that Early Victorian modesty would not be amiss. One likes and admires the healthy, active girl, who plays tennis and golf, and can pull at an oar, but I confess I should not like to see my daughter-in-law with her

nether limbs tightly encased in diaphanous material and the *tout ensemble* reminding one of a Greek goddess in difficulties or a Columbine in a harlequinade. I love modesty in a woman and, though it is the fashion to laugh at the Easterns for keeping their women veiled and secluded from the vulgar gaze, I think they are to be admired for wishing to shield and protect what they hold so sacred. Fortunately, the great majority of our countrywomen can be trusted to decently conceal all that modesty requires to be concealed. Some of the modern costumes for women are, to my mind, far worse and more suggestive than absolute nudity. There is, of course, nothing actually wicked in walking about without any clothes on—I think myself that it is more wicked to walk about with clothes cut in such a way as to excite undesirable thoughts in the mind of the young man in the street. There is nothing wicked in Nature: it is the way we put things and look at things. The other day I was travelling in the Underground Railway, and found myself sitting opposite to a young lady whose apparel caught my attention. This particular young woman was not very pretty in the face, but her other attractions were, I am bound to say, almost irresistible. She had on a very fine silk and affectionately clinging drapery, which was of the slit-up-one-side variety. Her nether limbs were most exquisitely moulded, and were encased in the finest black silk stockings, through which the delicate pink skin showed up with much effect. Her shoes were of a pattern and shape once seen never to be forgotten, and, as she crossed her legs (pardon the use of the word) I saw a dainty watch on a dainty garter. If the spirit of mischief, which sometimes makes me rather a nuisance to my friends, had animated me at that moment—"psychological moment" is, I be-

lieve, the correct term—I should have leaned forward and asked her to let me look at the time. There were two or three other men in the compartment, and they gave me quizzical glances. I knew what was passing in their heads, and they knew what was passing in mine. It was something like this: “Well, I never did see better shaped limbs; but I’m glad she’s not my daughter.” I must be excused for giving an account of this apparently insignificant incident, as it opens up the path to a short article I wrote some time ago, in answer to certain strong-minded ladies who had got it into their heads that man, vile man, is the author of all the disasters and woes which beset suffering female humanity. I now give the article exactly as I wrote it, word for word, and I have not even altered the heading to suit the character of this book! Since those ladies who attacked “man” with such vitriolic warmth did not hesitate to speak quite freely of subjects which are usually left for the physician’s or surgeon’s consulting rooms, I must make some apology for allusions to facts the mention of which is *necessary* to prove my contentions.

THE REVOLT OF WOMAN, COMMONLY CALLED THE “WOMEN’S MOVEMENT.”

In treating of sex questions it seems to me that physical conformation is not sufficiently considered. The form of a man is such that he is constantly being reminded of possibilities in a way which is not apparent in the case of a woman. Boys are thus early tempted, but girls are not. Then, again, in early life nature will not allow a young man to be a bachelor in the same sense that a girl is a maiden, for the simple—but always overlooked—reason that he has been denied the natural outlet or relief

afforded to a woman at certain definite periods, and without any effort whatever on her part. In other words, Nature favours a woman with relief which a man cannot properly and decently obtain without the assistance of womankind. This assistance the Creator intended man to have and, if we fail to provide him with that which alone can preserve his self-respect and manliness, we may in time do incalculable damage by forcing him in the direction of various forms of vice infinitely degrading and demoralizing, and fatal to the very strength of the nation to which he belongs. Another point is that every man who marries a woman who is not a widow expects the girl to be a maiden, but how many women, who know anything at all, expect the man to be a virgin in the sense of never having touched another woman? The importance of chastity in one case is so very much greater than in the other. Fear keeps women "honest," and rightly, too, for are they not to be the means of continuing their husband's name in their children?

Two unmarried ladies told me not long ago that they knew everything, and that I could not enlighten them on any sex question or sex problem. I felt sorry, because I knew that, as ladies of mature years, they should not have spoken so if they wished to retain their characters for respectability. In these days, and especially since the appearance of certain articles in the "Suffragette," it seems necessary to call a spade a very decided spade, so I will proceed to explain one or two points which seem to have been lost sight of by those ladies who would make out that men are monsters of iniquity, and that all the trouble in the world comes through the male sex.

The modern female between girlhood and womanhood—the strange hobble-skirted little creature sometimes called a "Flapper,"—who pretends to

know everything, does really know far too much, is prepared to go anywhere, and do anything. What is she? Is she the product of man's wickedness or the too go-ahead times? She is a hardened creature, incapable of blushing and, though clad in the scantiest and most transparent attire, feels no sense of shame. She shows her shapely leg—plenty of it—and her one or two garments fit so tightly that there is very little left to the imagination. Of course, there is really nothing to be ashamed of in the human form divine, but it certainly comes as rather a shock or startler to some men to observe how much of her the modern young woman permits him to see and think about. Our British climate is against an absolute discarding of all clothing, but there are not wanting indications that, before many more years have rolled by, ladies with pretty figures will be content with painting or dyeing their skins with harmonious and tasteful designs—though they may wear bangles on wrists and ankles, and possibly a watch below, or above the knee. Then we shall have returned to some extent to the ways of the ancient Britons. Possibly this would be all right. There is nothing at all disgraceful in anything in Nature. What I am trying to show is that the female is ever trying to captivate and fascinate the male; she is disappointed if she fails to attract him: Nature tells her that she has that within her which should attract him, and she knows by instinct that he may be caught by the thousand and one blandishments which she can bring to bear on his susceptibilities.

In Isaiah iii., verse 16, we read: "Moreover the Lord saith, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet: therefore the

Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, &c.”

The worst of quoting from the Old Testament is that people nearly always say, “Oh, that was the old dispensation—it does not apply to the present day.” But even the New Testament, relating to the new dispensation, is not always well received by the most religious and devout persons of the Christian persuasion. The other day a friend of mine called the attention of a Suffragette lady to St. Paul’s admonitions to women, their duties to their husbands, &c., &c. The strong-minded lady at once retorted, “Oh, that is not Christianity. St. Paul wrote a lot of rubbish about women, and did not know what he was talking about.” The point was not pressed, but it must occur to any impartial person that, if St. Paul wrote “rubbish” about such an extremely important matter as *sex relationship and duty*, very possibly the rest of his teaching was, if not worthless, at least open to criticism and doubt.

But it is not the poor little “flapper” who is alone to blame; indeed, she is but a small drop in the bucket; nor is it the poor, unfortunate girl who sells her person in order that she may keep body and soul together; it is the unscrupulous woman of Society who does so much harm. With her it is pure wickedness which makes her unfaithful to her husband and leads her to ruin the careers of young men who would otherwise marry and lead good lives. What is usually called prostitution is, of course, very dreadful when carried out by poor women to keep themselves alive, or support their orphan families, but it is not a thousandth part as bad as that prostitution which is taking place in those ranks where it is not at all necessary to life, and where it is *vice* pure and simple.

Most right thinking men like to see women happy

and enjoying themselves, and would not withhold from them any innocent pleasures, such as smoking, which soothes their nerves ; but there are others who would selfishly withhold the fragrant weed from their sisters whilst indulging in its use themselves. We all know that women are, especially at certain times, very nervous and irritable, and the use of tobacco is just what they require to steady them and ease their sufferings. The present writer would deny no legitimate pleasure to women : all the most exquisite pleasures of life are associated with what?—our mothers and our wives. Why do young men work so hard at their professions? Is it not, in nine cases out of ten, that they may earn enough to make a little home in which to shelter and cherish some particular girl they love? Is not the “ruling passion” at the bottom of every real man’s existence? Are there any pleasures to compare with those men derive from God’s most beautiful and precious gift? The passion between the sexes is so intense that, in desire for relief and satisfaction, it comes next to hunger and thirst. Why make a mystery of it, for it rules the whole world! The fair sex is quite aware of it, and wide awake to possibilities. Ninety-nine women out of a hundred love to be admired and run after by men—it is their nature—just as it is the nature of the little hen sparrow to try to secure the attention of the little cock sparrow. No right-minded man objects to this, but it so often happens that the lady, having angled for and caught the gentleman, turns round and abuses him for kissing or otherwise falling in with her requirements. Respect for women is one thing, but giving in to inconsistencies is quite another. There is nothing a woman so much resents as neglect or indifference. A very smartly dressed woman, walking down a fashionable street, would rather submit to the in-

dignity of being kissed against her will, than to the humiliation of not being noticed at all. Lately, the outrageous fashions of transparent hobbles and split skirts—worn by many so-called ladies—reveal not only the persons but also the want of delicacy of the wearers. The writer of these lines is not easily shocked, but has often felt shame and disgust at the open exhibition of feminine charms which are supposed to be kept, if not concealed altogether, at least covered up from the inspection of the “man in the street.” Much of our modern literature is simply disgusting, the clothing of our women is lacking in the first principles of modesty, and even a return to the Early Victorian simplicity would be a relief to those who rightly regard woman as the most sacred treasure and most exquisite gift of God to man.

When a woman gives herself to a man in marriage she sinks her identity, as it were, in her husband; she changes her name to his name, and becomes part of him. He renders himself responsible for her maintenance, and the offspring take his name, and he is responsible for their bringing up and maintenance. If chastity and faithfulness are admirable in the man, they are absolutely essential in the woman, since one single departure from the path of virtue on her part may possibly mean not only indelible disgrace to an honoured name, but the cruel unfairness of forcing on the husband the bringing up of another man’s child. So that there can be no comparison between the importance of chastity in the male and female. I would say that it should be the aim and object of every man to so order and direct his desires that they should be centered on one woman only. It should be repellent to his nature to think of other women except in the way of kindly wishes and friendliness.

Now, I trust that my readers will see from the above that I have endeavoured to handle a somewhat delicate and difficult task in an honest manner, and without unduly offending susceptibilities. I am actuated by a desire to see an improvement in the conduct of women generally. As an old friend of mine used to say, "People are apt to forget that what applies to old Adam applies also to old Madam," and those high-spirited ladies who would wish to lay all the blame for the misfortunes of their sex at the door of "man" must remember that their responsibilities are great, and that every time they forget modesty they run a chance of leading astray their brothers in human temptation.

Next to my absolute and unbounded confidence in God and love to obey Him comes my love for certain of my fellow-creatures, and it always seems difficult to know whether parents or children occupy the second place. I think the children come next, because of their youth and inexperience, which render our loving care most necessary. Then, I think, come those women whose love and patient devotion enable men to overcome difficulties and troubles which would otherwise overwhelm them. A good woman's influence often moulds a man's character and sends him off on the right path from which he might stray were it not for her sympathy and help.

"Soul of my soul, heart of my heart,
 Love of my love's intensity,
 Apart from thee life seems no life,
 But a void of vast immensity.

"To see thy face, to hear thy voice,
 To touch thy hand, or breathe thy air,
 Are pleasures which are greater far
 Than all earth's beauties rich and rare.

“ This love is not an earthly love,
 Its source is far in Heaven above ;
 In ages past we met before,
 And now our love is more and more.

“ Intensified by miseries here,
 Washed by many a crystal tear ;
 Purified by sufferings rare,
 Until it shines so passing fair

“ That even angels can but own
 That love may every sin atone.
 No dross our loving bosoms hold,
 For naught remains but purest gold.”

A heaven without the people I love so much would not be a heaven to please me. I firmly believe that in the next stage of existence all our greatest pleasures and delights on earth will be intensified a hundredfold, and that all those who have loved God in this world, and have accepted with true gratitude His exquisite gifts, and obeyed His laws, will be rewarded by an extension of the delights of life which “ pass man’s understanding.” But I do not think these pleasures will come to the low-minded and brutish men who debase the sweetest thing on earth, or to those women who wickedly take advantage of the weaknesses and baser desires of mankind. It is only the spiritual minded who can ever hope to fully realize the intense delights of the spirit life. At first it seemed strange to me to find that natural desires should lead me to think seriously of the higher life. Now I can reason it out, after all these years of thought, and no doubt the process of reasoning in my brain has been something after this fashion. “ God has given me intense pleasure in the contemplation of His most exquisite gift—it is

too wonderful, it is so beautiful and sweet that I cannot find words to express my gratitude—therefore how great and how merciful is God, and how can I ever hope to thank Him sufficiently for such a beautiful gift?”

Here was born in my mind and heart that gratitude to the Almighty which might never have come into existence had mere food, drink, and sleep been the only blessings for which to return thanks. So that, in my own case at least, my very highest and sincerest aspirations towards the better life and towards God Himself, are really the outcome of what so many—I think they are mistaken—call human passions and human weaknesses.

