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THE
Power and Responsibility
of Womanhood.

By
VIOLET TRENCH.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

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Power and Responsibility
of Womanhood.

WRITTEN FOR GIRLS

BY

VIOLET TRENCH.

Ah, wasteful woman! She who may
On her sweet self set her own price,
Knowing he cannot choose but pay—
How has she cheapen'd Paradise!

How given for nought her priceless gift,
How spoiled the bread and spill'd the wine,
Which, spent with due, respective thrift,
Had made brutes men, and men divine!

Coventry Patmore.

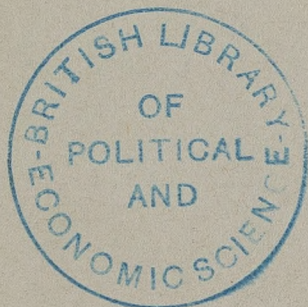
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women.

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The Power and Responsibility of Womanhood.

AMONG the many things to which women of the present day are awakening is their responsibility to their future children. A responsibility which exists because life is not a matter of chance, but a perfectly ordered plan built upon laws which prevail throughout Nature.

The knowledge of these laws has been too long an avoided subject by those entrusted with the upbringing of boys and girls. Girls especially are left untaught to gather what information they can from, as a rule, low-minded ignorant people. They gain distorted knowledge of the facts of life, conclude it is a nasty subject, and never know that the fault lies in their own blindness. In truth, life is the most wonderful, beautiful, and noble gift they possess, and it is their duty to realise its highest possibilities. The greatest help towards making real these possibilities is to be found in a true knowledge of the laws governing life.

Every human being has a right to this knowledge, and having gained it, there are few who will not desire that the same knowledge should be spread to help others in the fulfilment of their duty.

Ignorance has led too many of us to think of ourselves as under a special dispensation with laws only for our souls, it has led us to overlook the fact that God gave us bodies also, governed by a complete and perfect code of laws.

When we realise our place and part in the great plan of Nature, it is like finding the clue to a Chinese puzzle; many mysteries fall into place and we see

the chain that links all life, and makes it a reasonable plan by virtue of the uniformity which exists in the fundamental laws for every form of living thing, from the lowest to the highest.

One of these primary laws of life is reproduction. In all, except the lowest species, life is passed on by the united action of two separate and different members of the same species. Under varying laws we see the same principle carried out all through Nature. First, the ground is prepared, then the seed is sown, and there follows a time of waiting for the young plant to grow "after its kind," then waiting again for the bud which, if uninjured, will bloom into a full flower, with its various parts and its power of transmitting life. One blossom is different from another, each designed to complete the work of the other. What we call the female flower contains in its centre several distinct parts, called the stigma, style, pistel, and ovary or seed vessel. The ovary holds what will make the seeds as soon as the pollen from the male flower reaches it. This pollen is carried by the bees or the wind until it is caught on the sticky surface of the stigma, and passed down through the pistel to the ovary so that the essences of the two flowers are brought together, made one, and new life is the result.

A little higher up the ladder of life we find the birds, for whom the law is that they mate, build a nest, and together rear a family. In their case there is a substance within the body of the mother-bird which forms the eggs as soon as the fertilizing essence is passed direct to her from the father-bird. For some weeks after she has laid the eggs her mate must provide for her, and when hatched the little ones need the care of father and mother until they are fledged. Therefore, as parents, the birds' responsibility and labour is much greater than that of the flowers or the fishes, but such is the law right up the ladder to the human family.

With every step gained the responsibility of parenthood is increased, the care needed becomes greater. The offspring is more helpless, and the number born at one time decreases, so that life is more precious, until at last we reach that most precious, most helpless of living things, a human child. Here the responsibility of parenthood reaches a height incomparably above all that has gone before, but the gain is as incomparably great, for here Love blossoms into its most perfect expression. In the

love of a little child father and mother meet, they find their own greatest joy, and in them, in the human family, the world finds the perfect type of love.

It is here also that we must pause and consider the tremendous difference between human beings and the rest of creation.

We have glanced at what man has in common with the rest of creation, but at this point something entirely new appears. With man a new force was brought into the world. To the physical body was added what had never been given before, we find ourselves possessed of a threefold nature, body, soul and spirit, blended together into a wonderful complex whole; governed by laws which it is our duty to learn because we have free will and the power of choice; and in this lies the greatness of our responsibility to the Race.

Reproduction is brought about in the vegetable kingdom through the work of insects, the wind, and other wonderfully ordained agencies; and among birds and beasts, according to season, through their natural instinct; but in the case of human beings, who have been further endowed with Reason, it is ruled by free will and individual choice. It is this power of choice that has been left untrained, in the blackness of ignorance, to chance, with the disastrous results that we see all round us; in men and women who degrade their bodies and imperil their offspring in ways unknown among what we are pleased to call the lower animals. Human beings have dared to think of this supreme power in their nature from a selfish point of view, from the point of view of their own pleasure and gratification. They have not studied Nature, they have given no time to observing the laws of life, and in consequence have totally failed to realise the significance of this power or the sacredness of the inheritance which they have received in trust to pass on to future generations.

We are each here as the direct result of God's plan for perpetuating the Human Race, and because the most divine powers that belong to manhood and womanhood were exercised by those who are our parents and brought us into being. Children of God yet of earthly parentage, therefore possessed of a divine and a human heritage.

When we think of all we have inherited from our father and mother, and from their fathers and mothers we probably each have things to regret, and also much to be thankful for. But on one side of our

heritage there can be no regrets. As children of God we have inherited His Spirit, in the strength of which we can fight, and by His power overcome the hasty temper, the moral weakness, the tendency to this failing or that, which we may have inherited from our earthly parents. But we must realise that prevention is man's work, not God's alone, and in thus thinking of the past and what we have inherited, we must think also of the future and of what we are preparing to pass on.

In this connection one of the first things we need to study is the health of the body, and how it should be maintained. The body is a far more wonderful machine than the greatest scientist of this twentieth century could devise. It has been planned by God, and given by Him to each one of us, and it is our duty to take care of it, and to learn the proper use and effect of such necessities as air, exercise, rest, and food, as such knowledge just makes the difference between health and illness to the body. No sensible girl who possessed a bicycle, sewing machine, or typewriter would attempt to use it and keep it in order without first seeking an experienced friend as a teacher, or at least getting a book and reading it. Otherwise there would be sad mistakes, much spoiled work, and inevitable injury to the machine. What is true of a mere man-made machine is a hundred times true of our bodies, bodies which link the physical with the spiritual, mind with matter, and which are not only the most wonderful working machine but the Temple of the Holy Ghost; and therefore entitled to the best care we can possibly give them in the light of the purest knowledge.

Yet, in spite of all this, most girls are launched into life practically untaught about the laws that govern their bodies, and that affect not only the whole of their own lives, but the Race of which they are the future mothers. The neglect of these outward and visible things is very bad, but there are invisible things neglected by which still more suffering is caused. It is difficult to express the combination of negligence, ignorance, and deliberate blind-folding that deprives girls of the right knowledge of that unseen part of their inheritance which may be summed up under the name of the Power of Womanhood.

This conspiracy of silence begins in the early years when any intelligent child asks questions about where he came from, and is snubbed with petty false-

hoods about babies being found under gooseberry bushes; whereas he ought to be told the truth from the beginning, of course very gradually and very simply. At first it is generally enough to say "God gave the baby to his father and mother" and then as the child grows more able to understand, the full explanation should be given by slow degrees, with the help of examples from among flowers and surrounding Nature. In the difficult years, twelve, thirteen and fourteen, too many girls are left to grope in the dark, alarmed that some illness has overtaken them, or perhaps just told "it is what all women have to put up with," and made to feel that an unfair handicap has been laid upon them without any reason, so that resentment is added to the girls' already strained nerves. In all probability a girl seeks information from those a little older in experience but as untaught as herself, and gains basely perverted knowledge, learning the facts of life from the lowest standpoint. This is like being shown a picture turned upside down; there is no beauty, and it is impossible to see the ideal that the artist intended to show.

The right way, which would save much suffering of body and mind, is for every girl to be told the truth gradually and carefully, if possible by her mother, *before* she reaches the difficult age. Different ways of expressing the truth appeal to different temperaments, but one of the first things necessary is to give every girl a reverent sense of her own importance, and to show her that she is passing from childhood and entering the road that leads to womanhood, with its powers and privileges, its duties and responsibilities. In doing this she ought to be told of the physical changes which will take place in her body,* and have their purpose explained to her, so that she may understand why during this stage of her life, she so often feels ill and irritable, tired in body and tired of everything. At this time the most sacred power in a woman's nature is beginning to develop, the power that will enable her one day to become a mother, and which, even if she is never called upon to fulfil the highest function of womanhood, still gives her, married or unmarried, the mother's heart, which is part of the inheritance of every true woman. This every girl has a right to

* See "Era of Womanhood," by Mrs. Clare Goslett; price 3d.

know. And if from the beginning it is put before her in a reverent way, and she is enabled to see her position it must give her a serious, responsible view of life, and make her realise that these sacred powers are to be used only for the holy purposes that they were intended, and that anything else would be sacrilege, dishonouring to God and to herself.

A girl taught in this way will readily understand the reason when, with the stage of restless irritability, she finds there also come to her times of a new gentleness, and she begins to take an increased interest in her appearance, which at the same time improves. Her hair becomes more glossy, her eyes more brilliant, her figure moulds to more graceful lines. As the months pass into years there dawns upon her a new sense of possibility, and with it there ought to come a new reserve, born of the realisation that she possesses a priceless treasure. For now she has entered into her inheritance of influence; influence which exists whether she wills or no, simply from the fact that she is a woman.

It is one of these wonderful laws of Nature that woman has the power of influence over man, and in the exercise of this, her greatest power, lies one of her greatest responsibilities. So many girls are left in ignorance of this fact that they cannot be blamed when they are vain and silly about young men who pay them any attention. But worse still, in their ignorance, some girls lead young men on, and idly flirt with them, rousing in them fires of passion that the girls know nothing of, but which may be the beginning of the young men's ruin, body and soul. The mere exciting of the physical side of nature must never be mistaken for love; it is dangerous to both man and woman, a pandering to animal passion which may lead to their judgment being carried away, and in moments of physical excitement their doing what not the remorse of a lifetime can undo, and the burden of which the girl must bear alone.

It is miserable to have to think of these ways in which God's precious gifts are spoiled, His wonderful plan marred, and unspeakable suffering brought upon His children. But the worst often happens to girls through their ignorance which enables wicked men, and wicked women also, to deceive and entrap them. Every young woman ought to know of the dangers and be able to recognise the difference between the true coin of Love and the base forgery of lust.

The word *sex* simply means "part," and men and women are each only a part of the whole, each a half incomplete without the other. Therefore, we cannot separate this subject, and say it is a man's question or a woman's question; it affects both equally, and both are responsible. But as women we must uphold the standard of life, and let men see that we expect and demand honourable living in them. It is said, with only too much truth, that men will give women whatever they ask, respect and all that the chivalry of their nature has in store, if that is claimed; or the opposite, if it is all that is expected or sought. Once again how great is the power of womanhood! and how increasing is her responsibility as the time in the natural course of her life draws near for the fulfilment of the ideal for every woman, that she should become a wife and a mother. It means not only the consummation of her own life, but that she takes her place in the making of history as an active link between the past and the future, and is responsible in great measure for what that future is provided with.

In speaking of marriage and motherhood as the ideal, it must not be mistaken for the old-fashioned view that it is the *only* way in which a woman fulfils her destiny, and that those who do not marry have failed to do so. Far from it: there is an enormous amount of necessary work in the world that can only be done by women who have not the cares of husband and children. There are many ways besides maternity in which woman's creative power enriches the world. Every woman worthy of the name is a mother at heart, mother to perhaps hundreds, quite irrespective of whether she ever knows the joy and the sorrow of being the physical mother of an individual child. But granting all this, the fact remains that the perfection of God's plan for human beings is found in marriage. The highest and best are achieved in the union of two lives which then make the perfect whole, and by whom is prepared the family life and the home. The home is the place on earth which has been specially sanctified by the Incarnation, and proved by centuries of development to be the only right surrounding into which to bring the priceless treasure of a new human life. Yet there is no other undertaking in the world that men and women rush into in the same irresponsible ignorance; cloaked, for girls at any rate, with the idea that it is "not quite

nice" that they should know anything about the highest duties that can ever fall to their lot.

I believe that every girl ought to know, from the time that she first becomes capable of intelligent thought, that she has an ever-present obligation to the future, because of the fact that she may someday be a mother, and that upon her physical strength and well-being will depend in great measure the health of any children she may have, and upon her self-control, upon her temper and general mental attitude will largely depend whether her child is going to have a good or a bad start in life. If, without giving the subject undue prominence, it were kept from time to time before girls, their minds would become so trained to the idea of their individual responsibility to the race as a whole, and to their future children in particular, that instinctively only the best sort of men would attract them; they would be much less likely to "fall in love" with the wrong sort. This brings us definitely to the thought of the supreme exercise of a girl's responsibility in her choice of the man who is to be her life's companion and the father of her children. We must remember that English-speaking girls have the choice of their husbands in a way that is allowed to the daughters of no other race, and as such a responsibility is theirs they are surely under obligation to do it with more serious thought than is often the case at present.

It is shirking the greater part of her responsibility if a girl does not take into consideration whether a man is physically, mentally, morally, and spiritually the sort of man she would wish her son to be. In judging of this she is right to consider also what his antecedents have been, to look to what his father and mother are. We are justified in taking the past as an indication of what may be expected in the future. Science and medical research have established the fact that there are certain physical conditions which are handed on from generation to generation. In the light of this knowledge it becomes a very serious problem whether any individual who knows that such diseases are "in their family" has the right to risk bringing a child into the world with, at any rate, a definite tendency to special suffering during its own life, and the probability of spreading disease to others.

The same law of heredity is recognised as true of some mental conditions, and where there are grounds for suspecting those diseases of the mind

and brain to exist in the family of either the man or woman, the individual's responsibility to the Race demands that at least they shall obtain expert advice on the subject.* On the moral and spiritual side the girl making her supreme decision must consider whether the man possesses the traits most needed to counteract the bad and enhance the good in her own character, and whether his ideals are such that he would help her to cultivate and strengthen all the good in their lives, so that jointly they might hope to give their child the best possible inheritance and surrounding. And let her always bear in mind that in the exercise of *his* supreme choice the man is under an equal obligation towards the next generation to ask himself the corresponding questions about her.

If only all girls could be brought to realise *in time* the responsibility and power of their womanhood, we should soon have a finer race of men, as well as of women. They would make life better for each succeeding generation by truly serving their own, and bringing into the world children really well-born.

In conclusion let me quote what Ruskin says to women in his essay, "Lilies of the Queen's Garden":—

"Whether consciously or not, you must be in many a heart enthroned; there is no putting by that crown. Queens you must always be; queens to your lovers; queens to your husbands and your sons; queens of higher mystery to the world beyond, which bows itself, and will for ever bow, before the myrtle crown, and the stainless sceptre of womanhood.

"But, alas! you are too often idle and careless queens, grasping at majesty in the least things, while you abdicate it in the greatest; and leaving misrule and violence to work their will among men, in defiance of the power, which, holding straight in gift from the Prince of all Peace, the wicked among you betray, and the good forget."

* Application may be made to the Hon. Secretary of the Eugenics Education Society to recommend sources of advice on this and kindred subjects.

EUGENICS EDUCATION SOCIETY.

Books recommended by the Education
Sub-Committee.*

“Teaching Truth”	M. WOOD-ALLEN, M.D. - - - -	2/6
“The Adolescent”	J. W. SLAUGHTER, Ph.D. - - - -	2/6
“Problems of Sex”	THOMSON & GEDDES - - - -	6d.
“Place of Moral Education in Family Life”	MRS. A. C. L. PENROSE - - - -	6d.
“The Story of Life”	ELLICE HOPKINS - - - -	6d.
“Preparation for Parenthood”	M. WOOD-ALLEN, M.D. - - - -	2½d.

* A large assortment of Literature dealing with methods of introducing Eugenics and Sex Hygiene into various systems of Education can be obtained on application to Mrs. Chambers, Hon. Sec. Education Committee, at the Offices of the Society.

NOTE.—The Committee does not hold itself responsible for literature recommended by the Authors of the above books,

Publications of the Eugenics Education Society.

Can the School prepare for Parenthood?

By JOHN RUSSELL, M.A. Price 3d.

Eugenics and the Church.

By The REV. J. H. F. PEILE. Price 3d.

Eugenic Education for Women and Girls.

By MISS A. RAVENHILL. Price 4d.

Eugenics and Education.

(1) **The Eugenic Appeal in Moral Education.**

By JOHN RUSSELL, M.A.

(2) **American Methods of Introducing Eugenic Ideas into Elementary Schools.**

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Eugenics and Future Human Progress.

By DR. A. F. TREDGOLD. Price 3d.

Heredity and Eugenics in Relation to Insanity.

By DR. F. W. MOTT, F.R.S. Price 6d.

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By HENRY H. GODDARD, Ph.D. Price 3d.

Mendelian Heredity in Man.

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Marriage Laws and Statutory Experiments in Eugenics in the United States.

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The Unselfish Society. (A Conversation.)

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By MRS. R. F. HAWKES, B.Sc., M.Sc. Price 1d.

Eugenic Education in Childhood

By MRS. PENROSE. Price 1d.

A Letter to Mothers of Little Children.

By VIOLET TRENCH. Price 1d.

Eugenics and Patriotism.

By PROF. EDGAR. Price 1d.
