

time of the Crusades, or a little earlier, began to revolutionize the social position of woman. The frank and unsentimental comradeship of pagan antiquity was superseded by an exaggerated, mawkish, and artificial homage which implied a lessened respect under the mask of a heightened one. The Emperor William II. (if he has not been misquoted) is, to be sure, liberal enough to recognize a third virtue, viz, skill in cooking. Woman's sphere, he said recently, is bounded by the three K's—Kirche, Kuche, Kinderstube (church, kitchen, nursery). It did not trouble him to consider how untrue he was to the best German tradition in making this foolish declaration. It is against the worn-out ideals of the age of chivalry that the women are now beginning to revolt; and although I am æsthetically shocked at their rebellion, my intelligence justifies and approves it. Let them reconquer the right to be physicians, priestesses, and, if they like, prophetesses,—all of which they were in pagan times.

I cannot close the present reflections without correcting the very general misconception that during pagan times the position of women was practically that of slaves. It will, perhaps, surprise many to learn that the legislation regarding marriage and divorce was in Iceland and Norway far more mindful of the wife's interest than it has ever been during the Christian era. The old Icelandic law stipulated, for instance, that if a man were divorced from his wife (even though she were the offending party) he had to return her dower intact. Divorce was legally obtainable if both parties desired it; and the law did not, as in Christian times, insist upon publicly humiliating and disgracing every man and woman who in youthful folly had committed themselves to a choice that made every breath a blight upon the face of life, and the hours a burden to be dragged through the weary length of day. Love was not held to be woman's only concern. Marital affection was rarely of the wildly romantic sort, but a mutual hearty good-will, esteem, and devotion, often amounting to tenderness, bred by habit and a community of interests. Generally speaking, love was not all of life to them, but an episode, though a highly important one. But it did not engross and possess them to the exclusion of all other interests. Primarily they were human beings; secondarily, women.

We fill the brains of our daughters with current conventional catchwords, as we fill their pockets with the current coin of the Republic, and it would no more occur to most of us to furnish them with the materials for forming independent opinions than it would to supply them with the tools for coining their own money. So long as this system remains in vogue, the happy comradeship between men and women which prevailed in pagan times is out of the question. For you cannot make a comrade out of a cackling flirt, or a simpering fashion-plate, or an amiable echo. Until we cease to teach our girls the pernicious folly that they have to live only to love, they will, in my opinion, not be worth loving,—besides being exceedingly trying to live with.

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