

that men could do—ay! as well. I myself have done as well as any man of my own age, and better—far better—than most. What is this new thing in the world? Nothing short of the great discovery that, given the pick of women, they can meet on equal terms the pick of men: yes, in any science, in scholarship, in anything not requiring your strength of muscle, the woman is as good as the man. I claim no superiority, as others do—equality alone satisfies me.'

'Yet it is not so.'

'Why?'

'First of all, because the Divine Order—say, if you please, Nature—has ruled it otherwise.'

'Again'—with a gesture of impatience—'the Divine Order! Now, listen. I looked about me, I considered, and I discovered that women are everywhere able to do work equal to that of the man and even better. They make anything they try to make; they write novels, poems, books; the magazines are filled with essays and papers written by women; the shops are kept by women: look at the administration of business houses by Frenchwomen! There are women artists——'

'All this,' said her husband, 'is quite true.'

'Actresses, musicians—in a word, this very generation effectually gives the lie, once for all, to the inferiority of women.'

'You think so?'

'I think so. What Nature disproves when the experiment is once made can no longer be maintained as a theory.'

'That is true. Has Nature disproved what the experience of the ages proves? One or two girls have passed examinations as well as the boys. They have even shown promise. Where is the performance? Where is the reversal of Nature's laws? Where is still the leading?'

'I say no more about it. You wrap yourself in your cloak of the Truth Absolute. Let me go on. It was more difficult for me than for other women to clear my mind of superstition. We are always Orientals. It is almost an instinct with us to believe that woman is not only lower than man, but that she ought to be married—it is a shame for her not to be married. Unfortunately, while I had emancipated myself from the doctrine of inferiority, I had not thrown off the supposed necessity for marriage. I therefore looked about for a hus-