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The Position of Woman in the Seventeenth Century
and her Influence on the Literature.

Mabel M. Burrows.

"To us surely it is as useful to know how the young ladies of England employed themselves a hundred and eighty years ago - how far their minds were cultivated, what were their favourite studies, what accomplishments they most valued in men, and what proofs of tenderness, delicacy permitted them to give to favoured suitors - as to know all about the seizure of Franche Comté and the Treaty of Nimeguen".

Macaulay. Life and Writings of Sir
William Temple. Edinburgh Review.

Oct 1838.

1912

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Although this thesis amounts to one hundred and sixty-four pages, owing to the wide margins and large type, it will be found, if trouble is taken to count them, that the words do not greatly exceed thirty thousand in number.

INTRODUCTION

Literature always reflects the spirit of the age, which produces it. Authors have turned to other times than their own for inspiration, for subject matter, for models of style; but, however much they have been indebted to past ages, there has always been some peculiar quality in their writings, which has marked them as belonging to the particular century, which gave them birth. The earliest English literature is full of the joy of fighting, of glory in the battle: it re-echoes the crash of the swords and the conflict of the spear-points. When more peaceful times came, the poets sang of other things - of the lives of holy men, of the abuses of their own time; and in the hey-day of their youth they burst into complainings against Love and his cruel darts. Woman began to play an important part in the literature.

At first she was merely a lay figure, endowed with virtues or vices according to the mood of the poet, and transported together with her environment and her lovers from the pages of ancient mythology to the literature of medieval England. Chaucer was the first to give us really

living portraits of the women of his time: even the female characters, that he borrows from other authors, especially his Criseyde, are quickened into life by his sympathy and insight. From his time onward woman has been one of the dominating influences of our literature . It is significant that the ages, which have been most generous to her, have produced the grandest specimens of art; and that the men, who have cherished the noblest ideals of woman, have expressed the greatest truths in the most enduring form.

In estimating the influence of woman on the literature of the seventeenth century, it will be necessary to consider first the general opinion of the time of her character and abilities, the way in which she was treated, and the kind of woman, which such treatment produced.

SECTION 1.

The general attitude towards woman.

In the seventeenth century, several things conspired to give woman a less honourable position than that, which she had enjoyed during the last reign of the previous century. Under Elizabeth woman had prospered; she had shared in the advantages of the liberal ideas, disseminated by the Renaissance; her education and her social position had improved; and she had inspired the minds of the greatest men of the century with some of their noblest thoughts. The accession of James Ist marked the beginning of a change. He himself was a great scoffer at women. His court "was so far from being civil to women", says one writer, quoting an M.S. of Aubrey's "that the ladies, nay the Queen herself, could hardly pass by the King's apartment without receiving some affront".

The political struggles of the first half of the century were not conducive to woman's advancement; but

the inferior position, that she occupied during this period, was chiefly due to a distinct change of attitude towards her. Instead of being regarded with the chivalrous devotion of Spenser, and the loving yet wise sympathy of Shakespeare, she was looked upon with contempt, so that even the laudatory poems, addressed to patronesses, were often full of covert sneers.

The Puritans were in a measure responsible for this change. Woman was in disgrace with them: they considered her a temptation, a necessary evil: and they could not forgive her, for being the cause of their expulsion from Paradise. This feeling towards woman became general. She was denounced in pulpits and satirised in pamphlets. Donne, in his "Anatomy of the World", expresses the popular opinion:

"For that first marriage was our funeral:
One woman at one blow, then killed us all"

Later on in the century, Charles Cotton blames woman for the same reason:

"The first rib did bring him ruin,
And the rest have since been doing,
Some by one way, some another,
Woman still is mischief's Mother" 1.

The seventeenth century was a religious age: the

1. The Joys of Marriage.

Bible was read and its truth accepted literally by Church men and Presbyterians alike: and ideas, which were distinctly Eastern in tone, began to be in vogue about woman:

"The whole World was made for man", says Sir Thomas Browne¹, "but the twelfth part of man for woman: Man is the whole World, and the Breath of God: Woman the Rib and crooked piece of Man". Milton held the same opinion. run on/

Adam and Eve in Paradise Lost are contrasted thus:

"For contemplation he and valour formed,
For softness she and sweet attractive grace:
He for God only, she for God in him" 2.

This being the accepted idea of the purpose of woman's creation, it was natural that men should form rather contemptuous ideas of her abilities. It was a moot point whether she possessed a mind or not; and even those, who were charitable enough to allow her one, were not so rash as to imagine that her mental capacities were equal to man's.

"Hope not for mind in women: at their best,
Sweetness and wit they are, but mummery possess'd" 3

was Donne's opinion. Evelyn, speaking of the daughter of his "worthy and pious friend, Dr Jeremy Taylor," says

1. Religio Medici Part 11

2 Bk 4 line 297

3 Love's Alchemy

"She seemed to be a knowing woman beyond the ordinary talent of her sex"¹; and Bunyan makes the Interpreter say, when showing to Christiana and Mercy the room containing the hen and chickens, "I chose, my darlings, to lead you into the room, where such things are, because you are women and they are easy for you."² It is significant that many of the poets of the century, when they are addressing some great lady, and wish to give her the highest possible praise, compliment her upon the beauties of her mind; and hint that she alone amongst women possesses such beauties. Ben Jonson, addressing a Countess, whose name is not given says,

"You make your books your friends,
 And study them unto the noblest ends,
 Searching for knowledge and to keep your mind
 The same it was inspired, rich and refin'd;
 These graces, when the rest of ladies view
 Not boasted in your life but practis'd true,
 As they are hard for them to make their own,
 So are they profitable to be known."³

Woman's inferiority was an established fact to the seventeenth century mind. Thus her education was often neglected, or confined to domestic and social accomplishments: she was the property of her parents to be disposed of as they wished, with but little regard to her own inclinations: her faults were held up before the

1. Diary Feb 26th 1680

2. Pilgrim's Progress Part 11.

3. An Epigram to the honoured ---Countess of -----

public eye by energetic pamphleteers, until she herself, in many cases, acquiesced to the general opinion : she was either hedged in by restraints and so encouraged to sin through want of liberty, or incited to a career of vice to provide pleasure for Charles II and the licentious gallants, who thronged his court.

SECTION 11

The treatment of the seventeenth century woman.

(a) Her Education.

The learned women of the previous century, who corresponded in Greek, and spoiled their eyesight by poring over old manuscripts have passed away: in their place we have the gravely sober dame, who is interested in theology, and whose recreation takes the form of listening to long sermons, and the gay society maiden, who plays, sings, dances, and airs her knowledge of French. An acquaintance with the more serious branches of learning was considered unnecessary, even dangerous for a woman.

"Learning and pregnant wit in woman-kinde
 What it finds malleable, makes fraile
 And doth not add more ballast, but more saile,"¹

wisely observes Sir Thomas Overbury.

"Unlearned be my wife", cried Herrick, when wishing for earthly felicity; and his sentiments were echoed by most of the men of his time.

During the earlier half of the century, when the Puritan influence was predominant, the education of girls was such as tended to make them much better and much more

useful women than those, produced by the system of education, adopted after the Restoration.

Domestic subjects were the most important item in the curriculum of girls of all classes; and constituted the whole knowledge of the daughters of the poor.

The wives and daughters of prosperous citizens, in addition to household matters, were skilled in the elaborate needlework of the period; and in many cases had some slight knowledge of spelling, reading and music. Maudlin, the wife of Yellowhammer, the goldsmith, is made by Middleton¹ to read the letter, which comes from her son at the University: it is written in Latin; but her imagination helps her to construe it. She scolds her daughter Moll for being "a dull maid;" and asks, "Have you played over all your old lessons o' the virginals?" The majority of the girls of the citizen class spent their leisure time in sewing; for their supply of books was extremely limited, even if they could read; and those, who had learned music, must have grown a little tired of playing over their "old lessons o' the virginals". This kind of life did not appeal to the wild heart of Moll Cut-Purse;

1. A Chaste Maid in Cheapside.

for we are told that she "could not endure the sedentary life of sewing or stitching: a sampler was as grievous to her as a winding sheet: her needle, bodkin and thimble she could not think on quietly, wishing them changed into a sword and dagger for a bout at cudgels".¹

Domestic accomplishments, sewing, reading, a little knowledge of music - such was the education that girls in the middle classes received three hundred years ago.

Mistress Openwork, in the *Roaring Girl*,² was evidently an exception, - unfortunately for her husband who, no doubt, would have been sensible of the wisdom of Sir Thomas Overbury's remarks, had he been acquainted with them. "Tis well known", says Mistress Openwork, "he took me from a lady's service, where I was well beloved of the Steward: I had my Latin tongue and a spice of the French, before I came to him."

The daughters of rigid Puritans were educated on strictly practical lines: their lives must have been dull, for music was considered mischievous and corrupting by people of their sect; and, if their fathers were indulgent enough to allow them to learn reading, in all

1. *A Strange Wonder* 1662.

2. *Middleton and Dekker* 1611.

educated:

"Her Education such
As might become the daughter of a prince:
Her own tongue speaks all tongues, and her own hand
Can teach all strings to speak in their best grace,
From shrillest treble to the hoarsest base"

The daughters of the nobility were the only class of women, during the earlier part of the century, who could lay claim to a good education; and to-day we might consider even their claim unjustified. Their studies were of a lighter and more feminine tone than those of the women of the sixteenth century. The latter have been so praised for their learning, that we are inclined to forget that, apart from Latin, Greek and Hebrew, they did not know as much as many board-school children of the present day. The teaching of history, geography, arithmetic, and science was in its infancy. This was also the case in the seventeenth century; and, as the ancient languages were not generally studied, the education of the women was confined to a very limited number of subjects.

Fashionable boarding schools became popular towards the end of the century; but even then some fathers following the custom, which prevailed in their

youth, preferred to have their daughters educated by private masters. [Mrs Alia Thornton, speaking of her ^{NP} life in Ireland about the year 1632, shows what was the usual course of study, that girls in the upper classes were expected to follow at that time. She says that she had "the best education that the Kingdom could afford, having the advantage of society in the sweet and chaste company of the Earl of Stafford's daughter, the most virtuous Lady Anne and the Lady Arbella Wentworth, learning those qualities with them, which my father ordered namely - the French language to write and speak the same, singing, dancing, playing on the lute and therboe learning such other accomplishments of working silks, gum work, sweetmeats, and other suitable housewifery, as by my mother's virtuous provision and care she brought me up in what was fit for her quality and my father's child."

Some skill in needlework was a sine qua non for every woman; and handsome specimens of this art were often shown with pride to visitors. Pepys speaks¹ of paying a visit to Captain Lambert; and of "seeing the fine needlework of his wife, the best I ever saw in my life," he adds with his usual enthusiasm.

1. Diary June 18th 1661

The English of the seventeenth century were great lovers of music. We have seen that even the daughters of citizens had some skill in it; the daughters of gentlemen were expected to be able to sing, to accompany themselves on some instrument, and to read prick music at sight. Their parents evidently never considered whether they had any taste for music or not.

Mrs Hutchinson preferred subjects of a graver kind; but she was not exempt from music lessons on that account.

"As for music and dancing", she says, "I profited very little in them and would never practice my lute or harpsichords, but when my masters were with me: and for my needle I absolutely hated it"¹

Dancing was also taught; but it was not considered fitting for modest women to indulge too much in this pastime. The Marquis of Halifax, who did not allow the freer manners of the court of Charles II to affect the way in which he brought up his daughter, tells her to dance occasionally, and then only amongst private friends.² Evelyn's daughter Mary, who preferred the quiet happiness of her father's house to the gaiety of the court, danced very gracefully; "but", say her father,³ she

1. Introduction to Life of Col Hutchinson

2 Lady's New Year Gift or Advice to a Daughter

3. Diary. March 10th 1685

seldom showed that perfection, save in the gracefulness of her carriage, which was with an air of sprightly modesty not easily to be described."

It seems strange to us to count spelling amongst the number of subjects taught by special masters; but there were no preparatory schools in the seventeenth century; and spelling seems to have presented a real difficulty to the women of the time. It is difficult to know whether to attribute the startling varieties of spelling, seen in the letters of many of the ladies, to the varying systems of different masters, or to the poor attention paid to their teaching by their scholars. Orthography was certainly in an unsettled state; and much may be excused on that account; but it was no uncommon thing for women, who had been fairly well educated, to be unable to spell with any approach to correctness. Some of the letters, written by the ladies of the Verney family, remind one of the present day attempts to spell phonetically. Pepys complains about his wife's bad spelling. "In the evening", he says, "examining my wife's letter, intended to my Lady, and another to Mademoiselle they were so false spelt, that I was ashamed of them"¹

1. Diary Jan 31st 1663

Evelyn speaks of his daughter Mary's "correct orthography,¹ as one of her by no means smallest accomplishments.

The study of modern foreign languages, especially of French, took the place of lessons in Latin, Greek and Hebrew, which had been so popular in the previous century. The coming of Queen Henrietta and her court made French a necessity to ladies in society; and it became a subject that was almost universally taught to the daughters of gentlemen. Dorothy Osborne knew enough French to read *Cléopâtre* and *Le Grand Cyrus* in the original.² French romances, especially those of Mlle de Scudery, were widely read by English women in the seventeenth century. Pepys's wife was fascinated by them; but they did not appeal to her husband; for he says, "I find my wife troubled at my checking her last night in the coach, in her long stories out of *Grand Cyrus*, which she would tell, though nothing to the purpose, nor in any good manner."³

After the accession of Charles II life in England became much gayer and more aimless: the whole country seemed enervated by the vicious example of the court: serious things were banished, they tasted too much of death to please those, who were trying to forget, that they were

1 Diary March 10th 1668

2 Letter to Sir Wm Temple Feb 27th 1653

3 Diary May 12th 1666

mortal. Girls were introduced by their mothers, at an early age, into a society where vice abounded: accomplishments, other than domestic, were needed to help them to take a fitting place in the gay world: thus music, dancing, drawing, and French were the subjects most studied: cooking and needlework went out of fashion. The boarding schools at Hackney and Chelsea were much frequented; and there girls learnt the social accomplishments, which were considered necessary. Pepys speaks several times of these schools. One Lord's Day he went to Hackney Church, chiefly as he tells us, to see "the young ladies of the schools, whereof there is great store, very pretty." ¹

It became quite common for women of the bourgeois class to boast such accomplishments as music, dancing and painting. Pepys was rather concerned when he found that several of the maidservants whom he engaged, were better educated in that respect than his wife; and forthwith he generously paid masters to teach her those subjects. ²

Before the Restoration, it was a woman's first duty to be a good housewife: domestic affairs occupied the chief place in her life; but under the "merry monarch"

¹ Diary April 21st 1667

Diary March 1st and 12th 1667

these things were altered: a woman's chief aim and desire was to be attractive: and she studied to acquire those graces, which she thought aided her natural charm. Some still clung to the old domestic ideal; and, if the court derided them, they were repaid for their devotion by the happy homes, of which they were the head.

The education of woman in the seventeenth century was not only confined to a few subjects; but it was also exceedingly superficial and trifling: very few women seem to have gained more than a surface knowledge of the subjects with which they were acquainted. There were several reasons for this lack of depth. Women were not expected to be learned, in fact the general opinion was in favour of unlearned women, sweetness and wit was all that was required of them: the troubled state of the country during the first half of the century hindered the progress of learning: and after the Restoration women seemed to find the pleasures of ~~the~~ society a greater attraction than the painstaking solitude of a student.

Naturally there were exceptions. There were some men, who were cultured and possessed with a deep love of learning, and who, for that, reason gave their daughters

a better education than the custom of the times warranted: there were some girls, who showed such talents while they were still young, that their fathers decided to give them unusual advantages: and there were others, who by their own efforts attained a height of learning, that is surprising considering the difficulties, which they had to overcome.

Lady Anne Halket born in 1656, had exceptionally well educated parents. Her father, Mr Murray, was tutor to Charles II; and her mother was governess to the Duke of Gloucester and Princess Elizabeth. She had all the educational advantages possible at that day; and became chiefly interested in theology, physic, and surgery.

Mrs Hutchinson early showed signs of unusual abilities. These were encouraged by her parents; for she says, "When I was about seven years of age, I remember I had at one time eight tutors in several qualities, languages, music, dancing, writing and needlework"¹ She was also taught Latin; and soon outstripped her brothers, who were at school, although her father's chaplain, who taught her, was "a pitiful dull fellow"

1. Introduction to Life of Colonel Hutchinson

Evelyn educated all his daughters well: they were taught Latin and Greek, besides the usual subjects. Mary Evelyn, who died in her nineteenth year, seems to have inherited some of her father's talents. "The French tongue was as familiar to her as English: she understood Italian; and was able to render a laudable account of what she read and observed- - She had read abundance of history and all the best poets, even Terence, Plantus, Homer, Virgil, Horace, Ovid: all the best romances and modern poems: she could compose happily, and put in pretty symbols, as in the *Mundus Muliebris*, wherein is an enumeration of the immense variety of the modes and ornaments belonging to her sex" ¹

There were others, who were living contradictions to the oft repeated assertions of woman's mental inferiority: amongst whom were Lady Joana Lumley, who translated three orations of Isocrates: Elizabeth Bury and Elizabeth Bland, both proficient in Hebrew: the Hon Mrs Monk, who unassisted learned Spanish, Italian and Latin: and Mary Astell, who was an ardent upholder of education for women.

1. Diary March 10th 1685

(b) Her trades and professions

The seventeenth century offered to woman very few occupations, which called into play her intellectual powers. Most of the trades, which she was allowed to follow, required nimble fingers and a quick wit, but a small imagination and no depth of thought. This century, however, meagre as are its contributions to the intellectual advancement of woman, saw the first appearance of women on the English stage, the uprising of female artists, and the beginning of woman's work in literature.

The trades, by which women in the lower ranks of society could support themselves, were many: we read of women hair-dressers, starchers, milliners and comfit makers. Many women earned a livelihood by sewing. Jane in the Shoemakers' Holiday supports herself in this way, while her husband is at the wars; and Mary Fitzallard in the Roaring Girl¹ disguises herself as a sempstress, in order to gain an interview with her lover. Pepys mentions sempstresses several times.² Many of these women worked for their husbands, who were linen drapers: others were employed by

1 Dekker and Middleton

2. Feb 2nd 1660. June 11th 1668. July 16th 1668.

shop keepers with a thriving trade, much in the same way as girls are employed by dressmakers at the present day. It was the duty of a sempstress to take her finished work to the houses of her master's customers; and she was not infrequently received, with the valet tailor and wig-maker, in the dressing rooms of men of fashion.

Although the Puritan women were not allowed to indulge in such a soul-destroying vanity as the wearing of finery, yet their husbands had no objection to their making and selling "baubles" to others. Their trades were often created by the very fashions which they condemned; and the dramatists, whose enmity they had gained by their sweeping condemnations of the stage, did not fail to realise, and make use of this fact. Randolph makes fun of the "sanctified fraternity" in the person of Mistress Flowerdew, who comes on the stage carrying pins and looking glasses to sell in the theatre. She laments the wickedness of the place, in which she finds herself:

"See, brother, how the wicked throng and crowd
To works of vanity! Not a nook or corner
In all this house of sin, this cave of filthiness,
This den of spiritual thieves, but it is stuffed
Stuffed and stuffed full, as is a cushion
Of the lewd reprobate"¹

1. The Muses' Looking Glass.

Bunyan speaks of a woman, who used "to wash the Rubbish that came forth of the lead mines, and there to get sparks of Lead ore"¹ Pepys mentions seeing women working "in the canals, sweeping of water"² and at another time he pays five shillings to two women guides.³ These women seem to be the forerunners of the hardy race of females, who, at the present day, work in brick-kilns and at chain making.

A tavern was not complete without a pretty maid to serve "the strong waters": Heywood's Bess Bridges⁴ was first a barmaid, and then the owner of a tavern. Married women, whose husbands kept an inn, helped to serve in the bar; and played the part of hostess⁵; and sometimes a married woman kept a tavern, while her husband was engaged in other work: the waterman's wife, in the Relapse⁶, kept "a brandy shop in Drab-alley at Wapping." Girls were employed as waitresses in Coffee Houses⁷, which took the place of the present day London Clubs.

The galleries above the lounge at the New Exchange were occupied by shops. These were kept chiefly by women, who sold powder, paint, false hair, and fancy

1 Life and Death of Mr Badman

2 Diary Sept 6th 1666

3 Diary June 15th 1668

4 The Fair Maid of the West

5 Pepys's Diary. July 20th 1667

Sept 20th 1667.

7 Betty in the Way of the World. Congreve

6 Sir John Vanburgh

articles of dress to society ladies. Pepys was fond of going there to see the pretty shop keepers. "My wife and I to the New Exchange," he says, "to the pretty maid Mrs Smith's shop where I left my wife and I am mighty pleased with this Mrs Smith, being a very pleasant woman."¹ Belinda in the Old Bachelor² makes fun of a country squire and his family, whom she met in the New Exchange, where "the father bought a powder horn and an almanac and a comb case: the mother a great fruz-tower and a fat amber necklace: the daughters only tore two pairs of kid-leather gloves with trying 'em on."

The country woman had not such a variety of trades from which to chose, as had her town sister; but, probably on that account, her life was happier and more contented. The "fair and happy Milkmaid,"³ celebrated by Sir Thomas Overbury, was no fable. Dorothy Osborne speaks of a common near the Priory at Chicksands, "where a great many young wenches keep sheep and cows, and sit in the shade singing of ballads." +un 01

"I talk to them", she continues, "and find they want nothing to make them the happiest people in the world, but the knowledge that they are so."⁴ Pepys also mentions

1 Diary July 13th 1667
also see Sept 6th 1664

2 Congreve

3 Characters

4 Letter to Sir Wm Temple May 8th 1653

seeing the country maids at Portholme "milking their cows there, they being there now at grass, and to see with what mirth they come all home together in pomp with their milk and sometimes they have music go before them." ¹ Farmers' wives presided over their dairies; and sold their produce at the nearest market. Evelyn speaks with admiration of "a gallant widow brought up a farmeress", who put him in mind of "Deborah and Abigail her house so plentifully stored with all manner of country provisions, all her own growth and all her conveniences so substantial, neat and well understood"²

The life of a domestic servant, in the seventeenth century, was rather a chequered one. Hired out as a chamber-maid, or a cook-maid, at a salary not generally exceeding four or five pounds a year, she might be taken into the confidence of her master, and mistress and treated almost as a friend, or blows and ill words might fall to her share. Sometimes she experienced both these treatments from the same people. Pepys sometimes treated his maids very kindly and familiarly, taking them out on pleasure trips with himself and his wife: at other times he ill used them and punished them cruelly

1 Diary Oct 13th 1662

2 Diary May 19th 1673

for slight faults. "Took out my wife," he records in his diary,¹ "and the two Mercers, and two of our maids Barker and Jane, and over the water to the Jamaica House, where I never was before, and there the girls did run for wagers over the bowling green: and there with much pleasure, spent little, and so home."

Another entry shows the darker side of the picture.

"This morning, observing some things to be laid up not as they should be by my girl, I took a broom and basted her till she cried extremely, which made me vexed; but before I went out I left her appeased"²

Again he is guilty of most cruel conduct. "I fell mightily out, and made my wife, to the disturbance of the house and neighbours, to beat our little girl, and then we shut her down into the cellar, and there she lay all night"³ Such treatment was extremely common: it was part of the brutality of the manners of the age.

If we are to believe the dramatists a waiting woman was as indispensable to a marriageable maiden, as beauty and a large fortune. They are extremely useful in the plays of the period, as confidants of

1. April 14th 1667

2 Diary Dec 1st 1660

3 Diary Feb 19th 1665

the heroines, and as messengers between lovers, parted by cruel fate and stubborn parents. The heroine's unwelcome suitor, favoured by her father, is often married to a masked waiting woman, believing her to be her mistress: the maid thankfully accepts a husband, whom she dislikes, and who will probably dislike her, as a recompense for all her multifarious duties.

The daughters of citizens and merchants who had been educated at some school, such as those at Bow and Putney, often became waiting maids in the houses of wealthy middleclass families. Several girls of this class were engaged at different times by Pepys to wait upon his wife.

The life of a waiting maid was much more pleasant and less arduous than the life of a domestic servant. If the lady she served were unmarried, her chief duties lay in attending her mistress in the house, out of doors, and at places of amusement; in seeing to her toilet; and in being able to amuse her, when she was bored, by discussing with her the merits of her respective lovers. Sometimes a waiting maid was employed by the father of her mistress as a *duenna*; but she did not always play this rôle successfully;

for lovers are usually more generous than parents. She generally slept on a trundle bed in the room of her mistress; sat at the same table; and was admitted to be superior to the other servants. She was often in the confidence of the lovers of her lady; and was called by them "fellow servant". Waller begins his verses to Mrs Braughton, waiting woman to Sacharissa with "Fair fellow servant;" and Dorothy Osborne, writing to her lover, says of her maid Jane "your fellow servant kisses your hands."

To be the attendant of a gentlewoman was by no means a dishonourable position; and daughters of poor gentlemen often filled such posts, with a view to widening their matrimonial chances. In great houses there were often one or two girls, generally poor relations, who held such positions. They helped the ladies of the household with the sewing and cooking. Doll Leeke, a neice of Sir Edmund Verney, lived at Claydon, the family seat of the Verneys, for a number of years: she was well treated and loved by the whole family.

Teaching was one of the first professions to be opened to woman. There were a number of governesses and school mistresses in the seventeenth century..

that any liberties could be taken with them without offence. The stage became very dissolute; and grave and serious men like Evelyn began to look upon it with disgust, although formerly they had enjoyed its performances. He records in his Diary on October the eighteenth 1666, that he was "very seldom going to public theatres for many reasons now, as they were abused to an atheistical liberty: foul and indecent women now (and never till now) permitted to appear and act, who inflaming several young noblemen and gallants became their misses, and to some their wives."

The most famous actresses of the time were Nell Gwyn, so much admired by Pepys, and beloved of Charles II: Moll Davis, the Wiltshire singer: and Mrs Betterton, whose life and character were above reproach, and who was chosen to teach elocution to the young daughters of James I.

It became very fashionable, during this century, for women to learn painting and drawing. Many ladies dabbled in this art. Some went further and made it their profession. They followed chiefly two masters, Sir Peter Lely, the celebrated portrait painter, and Vandyck the great Flemish painter. Some of them attained

a moderate amount of success as landscape and portrait painters: Mary Beale, a pupil of Sir Peter Lely, is perhaps the best known.

Apart from women writers on theology, who were fairly numerous, the seventeenth century can boast its literary women. A number of women in high rank amused themselves by writing verses: a few attained some celebrity in their own age; but are forgotten to-day. These writers are interesting, only because they show, that it was no uncommon thing for ladies to exercise their wits in rhyming. There were a few women, who regarded writing as a profession; and who contributed not inconsiderably to the minor literature of the period.

Mrs Katharine Philips, or "the Matchless Orinda", was born in 1631; and educated at a boarding school at Hackney. She achieved some fame in her own day as a poetess. Cowley¹ praised her for her "numbers gentle" and her "fancies high". She translated P Corneille's "Horace", which was acted before Charles II and his Queen in 1668, four years after her death, when Evelyn² saw it. Pepys³ saw it in the following year; and thought it a silly tragedy.

1 Ode on Orinda's Poems

2 Diary Feb 4th 1668

3 Diary Jan 19th 1669

Her poems are not numerous: they consist chiefly of odes in praise of Charles I (she was an ardent royalist) and of addresses to Lucasia, her friend, and to Antenor, her husband. Her sentiments are pretty, but not profound: The Soul is the most meditative of her poems; and it is not at all remarkable for its depth of thought. The most attractive quality of her verse is the Caroline lilt, which she caught to perfection. The poem, called "To my Excellent Lucasia, on our Friendship", illustrates this quality:

"I did not live until this time
 Crown'd my felicity,
 When I could say without a crime,
 I am not thine but thee.

"This carcass breath'd and walkt and slept,
 So that the World believ'd
 There was a soul the motions kept,
 But they were all deceived.

"For as a watch by art is wound
 To motion, such was mine:
 But never had Orinda found
 A soul till she found thine."

The eccentric figure of Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, next claims our attention. She was born in 1624, and married to the Duke of Newcastle in 1645. She published, during her life time, poems, plays, philosophical works, and the life of her husband.

Poems and Fancies appeared in 1653; Philosophical Opinions in 1655; and the Life of the Duke of Newcastle in 1667.

Her poems are sometimes incomprehensible and show little, if any, poetic skill. Her imagination was vivid; and had she exercised that faculty, instead of puzzling over problems, which she was not intellectually fitted to solve, her work might have been of more value. Her plays lack construction; and her character drawing is feeble in the extreme; but the plots are in many cases good. She might have written some interesting novels of the romantic type; but her desire was to be classed amongst the great philosophers of the world; and she expended her chief efforts on valueless speculation. There are some passages in her works, which are distinguished by their good sense and their charm; but these lose their force, because they are buried in the mass of her strange philosophical ideas. turn on

Originality was a passion with her; and this passion extended not only to her philosophy, but to her clothes and her manner of living. She was one

of the most eccentric figures in London after the Restoration; people gathered in the Park to see her pass in her coach; and her works were read eagerly, chiefly through curiosity to see what such a woman would write.

Various opinions were held in her own age about the "somewhat fantastical and original-brained, generous Margaret Newcastle". That many of the leading men of the time showed deference to her and her abilities, is seen from a volume of Letters and Poems, published in her honour in 1676, with the following dedication by the University of Cambridge:

To Margaret the First,
Princess of Philosophers
Who hath dispelled errors,
Appeased the difference of opinions
And restored Peace,
To Learning's Commonwealth.

Evelyn records her visit to the Royal Society.

"To London", he says in his Diary on April the thirtieth 1667, "to wait on the Duchess of Newcastle (who was a mighty pretender to learning, poetry, and philosophy, and had in both published divers books) to the Royal Society, whither she came in great pomp, and being received by our Lord President at the door of our meeting room, the mace etc, carried before him, had several experiments

showed to her."

The singularities, which she affected, and the strangeness of her works made her the sport of many. We find Dorothy Osborne entreating her lover "for God's sake" to send^a her the Duchess of Newcastle's poems, because she has heard that they are "ten time more extravagant than her dress". "Sure", she continues, "the poor woman is a little distracted, she could never be so ridiculous else as to venture at writing books, and in verse too. If I should not sleep this fortnight I should not come to that!"¹ In a later letter she says that she has seen "My Lady Newcastle's book"; and she is "satisfied that there are many soberer people in Bedlam".² Pepys was very anxious to see the Duchess, who drew as large crowds as if she had been "the Queen of Sheba":³ it was her peculiarities⁴ that attracted him; for he had no opinion of her literary work. He describes her play, *The Humourous Lovers*, as "the most ridiculous thing, that was ever wrote"⁵

The Life of her husband is interesting, because of the light, that it throws upon the life of the time; but it can claim no literary distinction. After reading it, Pepys passes judgment upon both the Duke and

1. Letter to Sir Wm Temple. May 1st 1653

2. Letter to Sir Wm Temple June 12th 1653

3 Diary April 11th 1667

4 Diary April 26th 1667

Duchess of Newcastle; he declares, that she is " a mad conceited, ridiculous woman, and he an ass to suffer her to write what she writes to him and of him"¹

Of this same work Lamb says, that "no casket is rich enough, no casing sufficiently durable to honour and keep safe such a jewel". The work is by no means ridiculous, nor can we consider it a jewel; but probably Pepys was thinking, that he would not care for his own wife to honour him in a similar way; and Lamb's taste for out of the way humours is well known.

Very different from the philosophical Margaret Cavendish, is Aphra Behn, the woman of pleasure. She was born in 1640; and, when quite a child, went out to with her father to Surinam, then an English possession. There she met the chief Oroonoko, whose sad love story she afterwards gave to the world in a novel. She returned to England; married a Dutch merchant called Behn; was sent to Antwerp as a spy; but, receiving no recompense for her labours, she returned to England; and forsook politics for literature. Her writings are numerous, consisting of poems, translations from ^{the} French, plays, and novels. It was by her work in the last two classes of literature, that she obtained her fame. Her

1, Diary March 18th 1668

novels were widely read by the women of her time: Oroonoko the most celebrated, contains one of the first attempts at local colour in the history of the English novel. Surinam, its surroundings, its climate, its vegetation, its people are well described, although a little idealised. She was chiefly noted in her own day for her plays: these show some dramatic power; and the dialogue is sometimes sparkling; but they are tainted by the fashion of the time; and their merits are obscured by indecency. Her/^{chief} works were published between 1680 - 1689.

Mrs Manley's first tragedy, *The Royal Mischief*, was acted in 1696; and was well received. From that time, she seems to have had a fairly successful literary career. She is best known as the author of *The New Atalantis*, in which she describes the leaders of the Whig party under assumed names; and does not spare them. This book brought her under the ban of the law; and she was imprisoned for a short time. Its popularity continued for a number of years: it is mentioned by Pope in *The Rape of the Lock*.¹ At one time she was the editor of the *Examiner*: she died in 1724.

[It is not surprising that women, who thus trespassed on NY

1. "As long as *Atalantis* shall be read" Canto 3 line 165

"man's prerogative";¹ were satirised by writers of the opposite sex. There is a delightfully humorous picture of a literary woman in Congreve's *Double Dealer*. Lady Froth describes to Cynthia the agonies, that she suffered, before her marriage to Lord Froth; and how, to alleviate them, she "writ, writ abundantly" "songs, elegies, satires, enconiums, panegyrics, lampoons, plays or heroic poems". This doubtful habit, contracted when she was suffering from the torments of love, was not broken by marriage. One of the best scenes in Congreve is that, in which Brisk undertakes to criticise and write notes on Lady Froth's heroic poem, on the illustrious subject of the love of the coachman Jehu for the dairy-maid Susan.

It is somewhat strange that the two women, whose writings are the best known to-day, had no literary aim; and wrote only for the pleasure of their immediate friends. The letters of Dorothy Osborne, since their publication in 1888, have made many others, besides William Temple, her faithful servants. Dorothy's personality, which constitutes the chief charm of these letters, will be spoken of in another section. The letters are extremely

1 The Wife Sir Thos Overbury,

well written, the style is familiar and easy, but never trite nor dull.

The Life of Colonel Hutchinson, written by his wife, has all the literary charm and elegance of style, which the Life of the Duke of Newcastle lacks. It gives a faithful account of how the Civil War affected Nottinghamshire; and is an eminently readable and interesting book.

(c) MARRIAGE

In the seventeenth century, marriage was thought to be the sole end and aim of woman's existence. Whatever view was taken of the purpose of marriage, whether men thought, as Milton did, that it was ordained for "the apt and cheerful conversation of man with woman, to comfort and refresh him against the evil of solitary life,"¹ or whether they thought, as Sir Thomas Browne, that its end was "to perpetuate the world,"² they all concurred in thinking, that woman was created solely for the benefit of man; and that she was fulfilling the purpose of her creation when she married. Many evils arose from this deep-rooted and wide-spread conviction: the majority of girls were given no other training than that, which was supposed to make them suitable wives; they were hurried into marriage, when mere children; and little or no freedom of choice was allowed them, the command of their parents was a law, against which there was no appeal.

Infant betrothals were common; and it was no unusual thing for a marriage to take place, when both the parties were very young; the boy generally travelled afterwards; and the girl lived with her parents until she was in her early teens, when she and her husband began their life

1. Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce.

2. Religio Medici Part 11.

together. Evelyn speaks of attending the marriage of the Duke of Arlington's daughter, then only five years old, to the Duke of Grafton.¹ Seven years later he was present at their re-marriage, which he viewed with disfavour. "This sweetest, hopefullest, most beautiful child, and most virtuous too, was sacrificed to a boy that had been rudely bred, without anything to encourage them but his Majesty's pleasure"² There were not many girls who remained unmarried, until they were twenty. Little Mary Blacknall, left an heiress and an orphan at the age of nine, was quarrelled over by her four guardians, as though she were a piece of property, not a human being. At last, one of them trying to arrange a marriage between her and his son, the other three offered her to Sir Edmund Verney for his eldest son. She was married at the age of thirteen to Ralph Verney, who was two years older: they did not live together for two years. There is a quaint little letter written by Mary to her aunt Mrs Wiseman on the occasion of her marriage. "Good Aunt" she writes, "besides the desire I have to hear of your health and my uncle's, I think it fit to acquaint you that now I am married, in which state I hope God will give me his blessings and make it happy to me"

1. Diary August 1st 1672

2 Diary Nov 6th 1679

It speaks well for the lovableness of human nature, that many marriages made in this way were successful; and that many husbands and wives, married when quite children and absolute strangers, acquired a deep and lasting affection for one another.

Most parents thought that they were doing their duty, when they procured a rich husband for their daughter - his character was often of quite secondary importance. The inclination of the girl was not consulted: usually she was considered too young and foolish to be able to choose wisely. "It is one of the disadvantages belonging to your sex", writes the Marquis of Halifax¹ to his daughter, "that young women are seldom permitted to make their own choice: their friends' care and experience are thought safer guides to them than their own fancies, and their modesty often forbiddeth them to refuse, when their parents recommend, though their inward consent may not entirely go along with it. In this case there remaineth nothing for them to do, but to endeavour to make that easy, which falleth to their lot, and by a wise use of everything they may dislike in a husband, turn that by degrees to be very supportable, which if neglected might in time

1. Lady's New Years Gift, or Advice to a Daughter.

beget an aversion." If a girl's father were dead, or unable to make arrangements for the future of his daughter, she fell under the care and authority of her mother, or her brother, or some male relative.

Dorothy Osborne's brother Henry thought it his duty to try to force her into marriage with one of her many suitors, knowing that she had no affection for them, and that she had accepted William Temple as her lover: "You are altogether in the right," writes Dorothy in one of her weekly letters to Temple, "that my brother will never be at quiet, till he sees me disposed of, but he does not mean to lose me by it.....¹ He thinks it would be to my advantage to be well disposed of and by that he understands richly."¹ Pepys was most anxious to see his sister Paulina married, before she became too old and ugly: he never seems to have considered her inclinations or desires.

Valeria, in *The Widow*,² is subject to the authority of Brandino, her sister's husband, because she has no nearer male relative. She has been married once; and has a fortune in her own right; but that does not give her freedom of choice.

Princesses and women of very high birth were

¹ Letter to Sir Wm Temple April 17th 1653

² Middleton.

sometimes given greater freedom in these matters than their less fortunate sisters:

Thamasta in *The Lover's Melancholy*,¹ when her brother is urging her to marry his friend Menaphon says,

"You're bitter:
And brother, by your leave, not kindly wise,
My freedom is my birth's: I am not bound
To fancy your improvements, but my own"

Waiting maids, especially those who served a lady of high rank, looked to their mistresses to provide them with husbands. Thamasta,² when she is angry with her maid, threatens to spoil her marriage:

"There's not a page, a groom, nay not a citizen,
That shall be cast away upon ye Kala.
I'll keep thee in my service all thy life-time
Without hope of a husband or a suitor."

The majority of girls seem to have accepted the husbands, chosen for them, without making any resistance: sometimes, like Gratiana in *The Wise Woman of Hogsdon*,³ they obligingly transferred their affections from one suitor to another, without any apparent difficulty. But this was not always so. It sometimes happened that parents were so blind to what constituted their daughter's real happiness, that they forced her to abandon a suitor, whom she favoured, and marry one whom she disliked. There were but few women, fewer in real life than in the

1 Ford

2 *Lover's Melancholy*

3 Heywood

drama, who had sufficient daring and strength of will to disobey their parents. Dorothy Osborne, who was by no means a weak woman, would not have dared to violate a parent's command. "Sure the whole world", she exclaims, when writing to Temple, "could never persuade me (unless a parent commanded it) to marry one that I had no esteem for"¹. This absolute submission to the command of a parent, in a matter of such importance, is somewhat difficult to understand in these days of greater freedom. One of Dorothy's letters gives us a vivid picture of the annoyances, that she had to endure, because of her affection for Temple. Many a weaker woman would have succumbed; and have married "the Emperor",² or some other distasteful suitor. She describes a quarrel, that she had with her brother Henry. "The Emperor and his proposals began it:" she writes on June the nineteenth 1653, "I talked merrily on't, till I saw my brother put on his sober face, and could hardly then believe he was in earnest. It seems he was, for when I had spoke freely my meaning, it wrought so with him as to fetch up all that lay upon his stomach. All the people that I had ever in my life refused were brought again upon the stage, like Richard the Third's ghosts,

1 Letter to Sir Wm Temple July 24th 1653

2 Dorothy's name for Sir Justinian Isham

to reproach me withal: and all the kindness his discoveries could make I had for you was laid to my charge.....Well: twas a pretty lecture, and I grew warm with it after a while: in short we came so near an absolute falling out, that 'twas time to give over, and we said so much then that we have hardly spoken a word together since..... You will have nothing to thank me for after this: my whole life will not yield such another occasion to let you see at what rate I value your friendship, and I have been much better than my word in doing what I promised you, since I have found it a much harder thing not to yield to the power of a near relation and a great kindness than I could then imagine it"

Several of the plays of the period are concerned with the outwitting of a stern parent and an unwelcome suitor by two lovers;¹ but there are quite as many cases, if not more, of the heroine torn from her lover and married against her inclination to the man, whom her friends favoured.² Ford has given us a touching picture of the misery, resulting from a marriage of this kind. Penthea, married by her brother Ithocles to a man, whom she dislikes, while her former lover is still alive, is t'

1 Margaret and Allworth in Massinger's *New Way to pay Old Debts* and Violetta and Aimwell in Shirley's *The Witty Fair One*.

2 Castabella in Tourneur's *Atheist's Tragedy*.

fortune were not so large, as they ~~had~~ wished. Mrs Hutchinson gives an idyllic picture of her husband's wooing.¹ He was attracted by the accounts, that he heard of her studious and reserved nature, until "he grew to love to hear mention of her" When at last he met her, and found that she fulfilled all his expectations, his love could no longer be concealed. "He daily frequented her mother's house, and had the opportunity of conversing with her in those pleasant walks, which, at that sweet season of the spring, invited all the neighbouring inhabitants to seek their joys: where though they were never alone, yet they had every day opportunity for converse with each other, which the rest shared not in, while everyone minded their own delights."

Another evil of the marriage system of this century was the giving of portions. Many men impoverished themselves to give their daughter a good portion; and then married her to some spendthrift roué, who was desirous of mending his broken fortunes.

"Not a virgin,
Left by her friends heir to a noble fortune,
But she's in danger of a marriage,
To some puffed title"

says Richley in The Witty Fair One.²

1 Life of Col Hutchinson

2 Shirley

Efforts were made during the Commonwealth to stop the practice of abducting heiresses, and of inveigling them into marriage; but it still went on to some extent. The case of Mary Blacknall has already been mentioned: she fell into good hands; but there were others, who were not so fortunate.

The idea of equality of the sexes in marriage was absent from the seventeenth century mind. A union, in which neither man nor woman took the head was inconceivable: one of the parties must obey: naturally it was concluded that it must be the inferior being, the weaker vessel, the woman. Sir Thomas Overbury seems to have been an authority on the subject of marriage. "A good wife," he says, "frames her nature into his (her husband's) howsoever: the hyacinth follows not the sun more willingly. Stubbornness and obstinacy are herbs that grow not in her garden" ¹

Moll Cut-Purse declares that she will not marry, because "a wife you know, ought to be obedient, but I fear me I am too headstrong to obey: therefore I'll ne'er go about it" ²

The Marquis of Halifax, when writing to his daughter, admits that "obey is an ungentle word;"

¹ Characters

² The Roaring Girl. Middleton and Dekker

but adds "the supposition of your being the weaker sex, having without all doubt a good foundation, maketh it reasonable to subject it to the masculine dominion"

The fact of a wife having to obey her husband did not necessarily mean an unhappy marriage: many men, who really loved their wives treated them so well, that they took a delight in obeying them. Such a husband was Colonel Hutchinson: he treated his wife as a friend: "he was not uxurious, nor remitted he that just rule which it was her honour to obey, but managed the reins of government with such prudence and affection that she who would not delight in such an honourable and advantageable subjection must have wanted a reasonable soul"¹ No doubt their happy marriage was due partly to Colonel Hutchinson's gentleness and consideration; but it was also due to the fact that Mrs Hutchinson was a true "meet-help" to her husband: she was not merely his housekeeper but his wise and loving companion. This was the kind of marriage, that Milton desired: he certainly would have objected to a wife, who contended with him " in point of house rule: not for any parity of wisdom, for that were something reasonable, but out of a female pride;² but his idea of marriage was not that

¹ Life of Col Hutchinson

² Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce.

base type of union that many men of his age made it, but a union, in which man and wife could take pleasure in each other's company and conversation. He declares in the Tetrachordon that the prime ends of marriage are "mutual solace and help." The majority of men at that time had baser ideas of marriage: they did not treat their wives as companions and partners, but as superior servants. The following dialogue is taken from *The Revenger's Tragedy*:¹ Vendice is talking about his father to his mother:

Vendice "Did he 'lack? You know all -
You were his midnight secretary."

Gratiana "No.
He was too wise to trust me with his thoughts."

Vendice "I'faith, then father, thou wast wise indeed"

Middleton sums up the evils of the marriage system that prevailed in his day, when he makes Isabella² exclaim:

"O the heart-breakings
Of miserable maids, where love's enforced!
The best condition is but bad enough.
When women have their choices, commonly
They do but buy their thraldoms, and bring great portions
To men to keep 'em in subjection:
As if a fearful prisoner should bribe
The keeper to be good to him, yet lies in still
And glad of a good usage; a good look sometimes;
B'y'r lady, no misery surmounts a woman's.
Men buy their slaves, but women buy their masters
Yet honesty and love makes all this happy,
And, next to angels, the most blest estate."

1 Tourneur

2 Women beware Women.

Before leaving this subject, a word must be said about those women, who did not marry. They failed to do so probably through one of two reasons: either they were entirely unamiable, or their friends could not provide them with portions large enough to attract any suitors. Few girls remained unmarried, because they preferred a single life. Their friends considered it necessary that they should marry, even if they had fortunes large enough to make them entirely independent. Mrs Alia Thornton had no desire for marriage; and her fortune was large enough to keep her; but she was induced to accept Mr Thornton, "contrary" she says "to my own inclination to marriage."¹ Evelyn² says, speaking of his daughter Mary, "She showed great indifference to marrying at all, for truly, says she to her mother (the other day), were I assured of your life and my dear father's, never would I part from you: I love you and this home, where we serve God, above all things nor ever shall I be so happy:..... and but for decency more than inclination, and that you judge it expedient for me I would not change my condition, but rather add the fortune you design me to my sisters, and keep up the reputation of the family"

1. Autobiography.

2 Diary March 10th 1685

The life of an unmarried woman was pleasant, or the reverse, largely according to her own disposition, and the temper of her friends. She either stayed in the house of her father as a general help, or was drafted as a servant, or waiting maid, into the house of some relation. Sometimes she was unhappy and discontented, and consequently was treated somewhat harshly by her friends: at other times by her helpfulness she made herself beloved of the whole household.

Paulina Pepys went to live with her brother and his wife as a servant; she was not allowed to sit at table with them; and when their maid Jane left she was responsible for all the work of the household. At last Pepys discovered that she had grown "proud and idle"; and sent her home to her mother.¹ He thought it his duty to provide for her, because she was his sister, not because he viewed her with any affection. After much difficulty, she was married to a Mr Jackson, whom Pepys calls "a plain young man, handsome enough for Pall, one of no education nor discourse but of few words, and one altogether that I think will please me well enough"² It does not seem to have been necessary to ask "Pall" if she liked the "plain young man".

1 Diary Nov 12th 1660. Aug 31st 1661)
" Jan 2nd 1661 July 23rd 1661)

2 Diary. Feb 7th 1668

We cannot but feel sorry for her, even if she were as ill-tempered as her brother declares her to have been; and we are glad to meet her again as the blooming and happy Mrs Jackson.

Betty Verney, the youngest daughter of Sir Edmund's family, led an unhappy life after her father's death. She lived first with one relation, then with another, until at last, in desperation, she married at the age of twenty nine a poor parson named Adams.

The lives of both Paulina Pepys and Betty Verney were embittered and their tempers soured, because they were unfortunate enough to be dependent upon their relations: they themselves, however were not entirely blameless. An unmarried woman could be happy, even when she was placed in the awkward position of both servant and sister. Doll Leeke lived with the Verneys unmarried, until the day of her death: by the sweetness of her temper and the helpfulness of her nature she became the favourite of the whole family; and never seems to have regretted her single state.

(d) Every-day Life in the seventeenth century.

The example of loose living, set by Charles II and his Court, was followed by many women in high rank; and affected even the citizen class. There is a marked contrast between the manners and customs, which prevailed during the early Stuart period and the Commonwealth and those, which were in vogue after the Restoration.

The ordinary lower and middle class woman, during the earlier half of the century, had but little time for amusement. As a child, her time was spent in learning those domestic accomplishments, which were so necessary; and she had no sooner left off wearing "hanging sleeves", and playing with "babies" than she was married; and her days were filled with household duties and family cares. Doubtless, she was not too busy to gossip with her neighbours in their homes and at street corners, and to attend christenings and weddings, the sole form of amusement left to her, after the closing of the theatres, when she could no longer struggle for a place in the pit. Puritan women were

allowed to be present at these functions; and they seem to have enjoyed to the full, what was probably the sole relaxation allowed them. Cowley¹ describes "a holy sister" as,

"She that at christenings thirsteth for more sack,
And draws the broadest handkerchief for cake."

There is an interesting christening scene in *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*. The gossips are assembled at Allwits house, waiting to go to Church.

"Give you joy of your fine girl, sir.
Grant that her education may be pure
And become one of the faithful"

says one of the Puritan women. They leave the house to attend the ceremony; and immediately a polite altercation takes place as to who shall take the precedence; each woman is anxious to give way to her neighbour; and much time and breath is wasted through their politeness. This is an amusing touch of realism; Middleton must have witnessed such a little comedy; it reminds us irresistibly of two present day women politely quarrelling about who shall pay the car fare. When the christening is over the gossips repair to Allwits house to congratulate the mother, and to partake of wine and comfits. Again

¹ Character of a Holy Sister.

the Puritan Woman is the butt of the dramatist; she is made to exclaim:

"Bring hither that same cup, nurse; I would fain
Drive away this - hup - antichristian grief."

This scene is one of the best pictures in the contemporary drama of the lower class woman at her recreations. Pepys speaks several times of his wife attending christenings¹; he also describes some weddings², at which he was present; the ceremonies on those occasions were not such, as would appeal to modern taste.

Much of the Puritan's woman's life was occupied by devotional exercises; some women of that sect gave their whole time to the service of religion; and became preachers. Their very earnestness made them the sport of the less serious-minded members of the community. There is always something amusing to those, whose take life calmly and evenly, in the enthusiasm and devotion of those, who are possessed with one single idea, which governs their whole being. The Puritans regulated their lives by a sincere, if ungraceful form of religion; the eccentricities of dress and manner, which their belief led them to adopt, were easily donned by hypocrites; 3 and satirised by their opponents. Cowley's picture

1 Diary Sept 3rd 1661

2 Diary July 31st 1665

3 The Character of a Holy Sister.

of a Puritan woman is interesting:

"She that can sit three sermons in a day,
 And of those three scarce hear three words away;
 She that can rob her husband to repair,
 A budget priest, that noses a long prayer.
 She that with lamp-black purifies her shoes,
 And with half eyes and Bible softly goes.
 She that her pocket ~~that~~^{with} lay gospel stuffs;
 And edifies her looks with little ruffs.

.
 She that sings psalms devoutly next the street,
 And beats her maid i' th' kitchen where none see't;
 She that will sit in shop for five hours space,
 And register the sins of all that pass,
 Damn at first sight and proudly dares to say,
 That none can possibly be sav'd but they
 That hang religion in the naked ear
 And judge men's hearts according to their hair."

There must have been some truths in this description, or otherwise as satire it would have been worthless; but this is the worse side of the picture. If Puritanism was a cloak for hypocrisy, it also helped to produce many noble wives and mothers, many women, who gained the respect and admiration of men at a time, when woman was in danger of being considered a mere toy, the plaything of passion.

Women of the bourgeois class seem to have enjoyed the same social freedom as men. They were allowed to walk in the streets unaccompanied; and to sit in their husband's or father's shop, talking to the gallants.

But the lives of those, who had any pretensions to gentility, were more restricted; it was necessary for a man-servant, or at least a maid to precede them, when they went shopping. The citizens' wives went to visit the Wise Woman of Hogsdon without escorts; but Bratiana the daughter of Sir Harry, was preceded by Teber, a man-servant.¹

The memoirs of this period furnish us with several interesting accounts of the everyday life of a young gentlewoman.

Lady Ann Fanshaw had a taste for boyish sports. After describing how she worked at lessons in needle-work, French, and music, she says, "Notwithstanding I learned as well as most did, yet was I wild to that degree, that the hours of my beloved recreation took up too much of my time; for I loved riding in the first place, and running and all active pastimes; and infine I was that, which we graver² people call a hoyting girl."¹

The Duchess of Newcastle describes the town and country life of her sisters with great simplicity and charm: "As for the pastime of my sisters, when they were int the country, it was to read, work, walk, and discourse with each other.

1 Wise Woman of Hogsdon By Heywood.

2 Memoirs of Lady Ann Fanshawe

Their customs were in the winter time to go sometimes to plays, or to ride in their coaches about the streets to see the concourse and recourse of people; and in spring time to visit the Spring Garden, Hyde Park, and the like places; and sometimes they would have music and sup in the barges upon the water"¹

But the most charming picture is that given us by Dorothy Osborne, when she describes her life at Chicksands Priory in Bedfordshire. "I rise in the morning reasonably early", she writes to Temple, "and before I am ready I go round the house until I am weary of that, and then into the garden till it grows too hot for me. About ten o'clock I think of making me ready, and when that's done I go into my father's chamber, from thence to dinner, where my cousin Molle and I sit in great state in a room and at a table, that would hold a great many more. After dinner we sit and talk till Mr B. comes in question and then I am gone. The heat of the day is spent in reading or working, and about six or seven o'clock I walk out into a common, that lies hard by the house, where a great many young wenches keep sheep and cows,

1 A true relation of my birth, breeding and Life, by Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle.

2 One of Dorothy's suitors

and sit in the shade singing of ballads"¹

The wives of gentlemen were chiefly occupied with the management of their households, and the training of their children. The ladies of the Verney family were generally busy with some great work, such as the making of bed quilts, the re-arranging of hangings, or the preserving of fruit. Lady Gardener's husband apologises for her to Ralph Verney, because she has not written to him, and begs that he will excuse her, for she is "almost melted with the double heat of the weather and her hotter employment, because the fruit is suddenly ripe and she is so busy preserving"

The Marquis of Halifax, after advising his daughter about her marriage, tells her what amusements she may safely enjoy: "To play sometimes, to entertain company, or to divert yourself, is not to be disallowed, but to do it so often as to be called a gamester, is to be avoided, next to things that are most criminal."²

Heywood's Nan³ sits down with her husband and his friends to play cards, after their early supper at six. These and similar diversions were the amusements of the ladies in the summer, when they were in their country homes; if they wintered in town they passed their

1 Letter to Sir William Temple May 8th 1653

2 Lady's New Year's Gift or Advice to a daughter.

3 A Woman killed by kindness.

time in superintending the education of their children, and in going occasionally to a play or a Court function

It was customary during this century for mothers especially gentlewomen, to allow some of their children to be brought up by relations or friends; many a child was almost a stranger to his own parents. Ralph Verney's little son "Mun" spent his early years with his grandmother: Evelyn was also¹ brought up by indulgent grandparents. This custom became more frequent owing to the Civil War and its consequences. Wives could seldom be with both husband and children at the same time; and many of them thought that their husband had the higher claim. Lady Ann Fanshewe was continually with her husband during the Civil War; and consequently her children were often left in the care of friends. Mary Verney, when soliciting Parliament on behalf of her exiled husband, sent her infant son and his nurse to the family seat at Claydon; her other children were in Paris. In many cases there was but little home life either for parents or children.

The Restoration failed in many cases to bring about a happier state of affairs. Although the country was at peace, many women in high rank knew

¹ Diary 1627 - 1631

little and cared less about their households and their families. Domesticity was scorned as old-fashioned and vulgar. There was a number of women, who still remained true to their duties as wives and mothers, who had higher ideals and aspirations than the desire of shining at Court and of being a leader of society; but the love of gaiety and excitement caused many to lead lives of dissipation and excess. Women of high rank were no longer bound by the restrictions, which had held them during the earlier years of the century. They went to places of amusement, or walked in the Spring Gardens and Hyde Park alone, or attended only by gallants; they were present at indecent plays; they gambled; they drank in taverns; in short they lived lives that were both selfish and worthless. It is small wonder that men, like Evelyn, were disgusted; and complained about the wickedness of the times.

A letter to Ralph Verney from his sister Cary describes the life of a young lady of fashion. Cary's husband is in London; and she complains because he has left in her care his daughter Ursula Stewkley. "I wish he had stayed at home", she writes on May the fourth 1674, "but your sex will follow your inclination, which

is not for women's conveniences. I should be more contented if his daughter Ursula were not here, who, after eight months pleasure, came home unsatisfied declaring Preshaw was never so irksome to her; and now hath been at all the Salisbury races, dancing like wild with Mr Clark, whom Jack can give you a character of; and came home of a Saturday night just before our Winton races at near twelve o'clock, when my family was abed, with Mr Charles Turner a man I know not, Judge Turner's son, who was tried for his life last November for killing a man, one of the number that styles themselves Tyburn Club and Mr Clark's brother, who sat up two nights till near three o'clock; and said she had never been in bed since she went away, till four in the morning; and danced some nights till seven in the morning. Then she borrowed a coach and went to our races; and would have got dances if she could; then brought home this crew with her again; and set up the same time. And since these were gone I, reflecting on these actions, and she declaring she could not be pleased without dancing twelve hours in the twenty four and taking it ill, I denied in my husband's absence to have seven ranting fellows come to Preshaw and bring music,

was very angry; and had ordered where they should all lie; she designed me to lie with Peg G; and I scorning and contradicting her we had a great quarrel" Ten years later Cary was a widow, living a gay life in London, and sending peevish letters to Ralph, when he remonstrated with her about her passion for gambling at cards.

The middle class woman was also affected by the freer and gayer manners, made fashionable by the Court. Instead of minding her husband's shop and contenting herself with attending an occasional wedding or christening, she began to ape the fine lady. Pepys was angry with his wife, when she began to powder her hair;¹ and made fun of Mrs Lowther who had her train held up by a page², and who had "a bracelet of diamonds and rubies about her wrist and a sixpenny necklace about her neck, and not one good rag of clothes upon her back."³

The following conversation⁴ between Mrs Amlet, a beauty specialist, and her friend Mrs Cloggits illustrates the change, which had taken place in the lives of citizens' wives. Mrs Amlet has been complaining about her lady customers who owe her money:

Mrs Cloggits. "But now you talk of conscience, Mrs Amlet

1 Diary May 11th 1667

2 Diary June 28th 1667

3 Diary Sept 11th 1667

4 The Confederacy by Sir John Vanbrugh

how do you speed amongst your city customers?

Mrs Amlet "My city customers! Now by my truth, neighbour, between city and court (with reverence be it spoken) there's not a --- to choose. My ladies in the city in times past, were as full of gold as they were of religion, and as punctual in their payments as they were in their prayers; but since they have set their minds upon quality, adieu one, adieu t'other, their money and their consciences are gone heav'n knows where. There is not a goldsmith's wife to be found in town, but she's as hard-hearted as an ancient judge, and as poor as a towering duchess."

Mrs Cloggits. "But what the murrain have they to do with quality, why don't their husbands make' em mind their shops?"

Mrs Amlet "Their husbands! their husbands say'st thou woman? Alack, alack, they mind their husbands, neighbour, no more than they do a sermon"

The seventeenth century woman

The aim of the previous section was to show what treatment woman received in the seventeenth century, what means were afforded her of developing her intellect, and what influences moulded her character. It is our purpose in the present section to give a slight sketch of the different types of women, produced by such treatment.

It has been shown that the seventeenth century admitted no doubt about the question, which troubled this country some years ago, and which troubles some minds still, of whether woman should be educated according to man's standard, or whether she should receive a training supposed to be especially suited to her weaker intellect. The education and occupations of the seventeenth century women were not generally such, as would stimulate thought; few women were concerned with deeper problems than the engaging of servants and the rearing of children. This is not spoken in scorn. It requires a far deeper knowledge of life (and surely the end of all education is not to amass worthless stores of book learning, but to widen our view of life) to engage a good servant and to train a

young child rightly then to wrest^{w + esHe}le with a mathematical problem. An acquaintance with the deeper branches of learning is in itself worthless; but so far as it gives us pleasure and thus stimulates thought and widens our sphere of activity and usefulness, it is invaluable. The fault of the education of the seventeenth century woman lay in the fact, that it limited her thoughts and her feelings to the small circle of her own family.

Many women, educated according to the system, which prevailed during the earlier half of the century, made excellent wives and mothers; and the highest praise is due to them. The state of civilisation at that time could produce no nobler women; had their minds been more cultivated and their ideas broader and wider, in the majority of cases they would have been no true nor fitting companions for the men, whom they married.

The ordinary citizen woman was no doubt ignorant and vulgar, considering her in the light of modern taste; but on the whole she was a sensible, capable person, very little given to whims and fancies; speaking plainly her meaning and living an active and useful life on a low plane. Her husband regarded her as his inferior; and thought that the duties of managing a household and a

family were mere trifles compared with the strenuous work, in which he was daily engaged; but probably he did not fail to ask and accept her advice concerning his business; and if, according to the custom of the time, he indulged in some cheap sneers at woman's general weakness and worthlessness, he was often forced to admit that his wife was no fool. The trades, in which many women of this class engaged, made them skilful with their hands, developed to some degree their taste and fancy, and sharpened their wits.

The education and occupations of gentlewomen made them more refined than the wives of citizens; and, if they had not that shrewdness, that comes of contact with the world, they had in many cases noble and brave spirits, capable of battling with an emergency.

The thoughts of unmarried women turned much upon possible suitors, or upon the merits and demerits of those, who had already declared themselves: there were but few, who had enjoyed the same advantages as Mrs Hutchinson and Mary Evelyn; and who could therefore allow their thoughts to range from the days of ancient Greece to the conditions of contemporary life. The majority of maidens seem to have been rather shallow, but lively and affectionate girls. The daughter of Lady Sussex was

in the habit of corresponding with Ralph Verney and his wife. She writes about her different suitors, giving them appropriate nicknames, such as "Buttered Eggs"; she says that she spends most of her time in exercising her fingers on the guitar; and once in a moment of confidence she discloses a secret recipe for making a paste to keep the hands white. It must be remembered that the majority of these young women were very young; at the present day they would be considered mere children, or at the most school girls; and, although they were older in many respects than modern girls of the same age, yet their minds had had but little time to develop; and the depths of their characters were still hidden.

One reason why Dorothy Osborne seems so infinitely superior to many of the girls of her time, is because, when she wrote those charming letters by which we know her, she was older by a number of years than the majority of her unmarried contemporaries. She had suffered many anxieties, which had developed the nobility of her nature and given depth to her character. This much must be said in justice to those young ladies, whose chief concern was the bleaching of their hands; but, in fairness to Dorothy,

it must be added that she possessed qualities which were peculiarly her own, and which neither time nor adversity could bestow upon her. Dorothy Osborne stands for all that is best in the cavalier maidenhood of her day. We do not wonder at Temple's devotion. She was full of the most charmingly teasing ways that ever distracted a fond lover, yet she was not merely a playful school girl, but a wise and tender woman, endowed with good counsel and pure thoughts. She had known trouble in the past; and was prepared to meet the future and its possible sorrow with calmness and fortitude. In spite of the unpleasantness, that she had to endure from her brother about her rejected suitors, she contrived to afford herself and Temple much amusement from them. She speaks of them with a gentle sarcasm. On her return from a holiday, probably at Epsom, she writes thus:- "There I spent the latter end of the summer and at my coming home found that a gentleman (who has some estate in this country) had been treating with my brother, and it yet goes on fair and softly. I do not know him so well as to give you much of his character: 'tis a modest, melancholy reserved man, whose head is so taken up with little philosophical studies that I admire how I found a place there"¹ Sometimes Temple grew despondent, and inclined to think that the

¹ Letter to Sir Wm Temple Jan 9th 1653

difficulties in the way of their marriage would never be removed; Dorothy could not offer him bright hopes for the future; but she could teach him to bear whatever trials it might bring with resolution and courage. "I agree with you too that I do not see any great likelihood of the change of our fortunes, and that we have much more to wish than to hope for; but 'tis so common a calamity that I dare not murmur at it; better people have endured it, and I can give no reason why almost all are denied the satisfaction of disposing themselves to their own desires, but that it is a happiness too great for this world, and might endanger one's forgetting the next; whereas if we are crossed in that which only can make the world pleasing to us, we are quickly tired with the length of our journey and the disquiet of our inns, and long to be at home"¹

Many of the Cavalier maidens made devoted wives; they made their husbands and the matters which concerned them their world; their lives were spent in never ceasing devotion to them and their interests. The delight of Lady Ann Fanshawe knew no bounds when her husband gave her proof of his trust and affection: "And, now I thought myself a Queen, and my husband so glorious a crown, that I more valued myself to be called by his name than

¹ Letter to Sir Wm Temple April 17th 1653.

born a princess; for I knew him very wise and very good, and his soul doted on me"¹ During the Civil War many ladies showed much courage in defending their homes against the enemy: Lady Blanche Arundel defended Wardour Castle, with the small garrison of twenty-five men, against the Parliamentary forces for six days; and the Countess of Derby endured a seige in Lathom House, until relieved by her husband and Prince Rupert. Their courage did not die with the first flush of enthusiasm; a number of them, when the war was over, further showed their devotion by becoming petitioners to Parliament on behalf of their husbands and their estates. The Duchess of Newcastle censures women who, armed with petitions, haunted Committees and waylaid members of Parliament, "running about with their several causes, complaining of their several grievances, exclaiming against their several enemies;"² had she known how painful this necessary work was to many of them, she might have been a little more sympathetic. The letters of Mary Verney, soliciting Parliament on behalf of her exiled husband, show how distasteful the task was to her.

Although these women, and others like them, did much to gain the respect and devotion of their husbands, they often failed to grasp the significance of important

1 Memoirs of Lady Ann Fanshawe

2 Life of Duchess of Newcastle

matters; and not seldom displayed those weaknesses, which have been considered peculiarly feminine since the days of Eve.

Ralph Verney was one of the busiest of men; the care of his father's family devolved upon him; he was oppressed by anxiety about his vagabond brother Tom; and consumed with the care of finding husbands for his five sisters. Lady Sussex, an intimate friend of the family, must have been well aware of this; and yet she was always asking his advice and help about most trivial matters.

"If you would please to employ somebody", she writes, "to choose me out a lace, that hath but very little silver in it; and not above a spangle or two in the peak I think would do well; I would not have it a heavy lace, about the breadth of a threepenny ribbon, very little broader will be enough;" the letter continues in the same strain.

"Let her as she is above other women, show herself, in this occasion, a good Christian, and above the pitch of ordinary women." Such was Colonel Hutchinson's last message to his wife. She obeyed his command; and, instead of spending her time in idle lamentations, she applied herself to writing the life of her husband for the benefit of her children. The immense superiority of this work over other seventeenth century memoirs of a

similar kind illustrates how far Mrs Hutchinson was in advance of the ordinary woman of her class. The unusual educational advantages, that she had enjoyed as a child, contrary to the wise saws of Sir Thomas Overbury, had developed her intellect and widened her interests. She alone amongst the women writers of her time shows an intelligent insight into State affairs. Although she was an ardent supporter of the Commonwealth, she was no blind partisan; and the faults of many of the supporters of Parliament did not escape her. Her superior abilities did not make her less devoted as a wife, ^{not} or less charming as a woman. She had a truly manly spirit; and could be relied upon to act with promptitude in an emergency; she was not therefore cold and unsympathetic as the following passage shows: tur

"After our wounded men were dressed, as she stood at her chamber door, seeing three of the prisoners sorely cut and carried down bleeding into the Lion's Den, she desired the Marshall to bring them into her, and bound up and dressed their wounds also, which while she was doing, Captain Palmer came in and told her his soul abhorred to see this favour to the enemies of God; she replied she had done nothing but what she thought

was her duty, in humanity to them, as fellow creatures, not as enemies".

Mrs Hutchinson was a Puritan; and that fact alone speaks well for Puitanism. We are apt sometimes to view the teachings of the "sanctified fraternity" through the discolouring medium of drama and satire; but, although Puritanism sheltered hypocrites, it also inspired many noble women with high ideals of virtue. The seventeenth century was a religious age; and most women, Puritan and Cavalier alike, during the earlier half of the century, seem to have felt that piety was the one thing needful.

It is with feelings of regret that we turn to the period after the ^R restoration. The education of girls of both upper and middle classes, speaking generally, served to make them frivolous and vain. They had no domestic ideals; their chief concern was to make themselves attractive to the other sex; they were witty and lively, free in their speech and manners, governed by passion or calculating vice, and almost entirely selfish. It is small wonder that even the "virtuous" heroines in the drama of the period are disgusting.

The marriage system of the seventeenth century was by no means ideal; and, although we hear of many happy marriages, there were also many unhappy ones, for which,

in a number of cases, neither ~~the~~ husband nor wife was so much to blame as the system, which decreed their union. The chief misery, resulting from marriages of this kind, generally fell upon the wife. The husband had other interests in life, his business, his estate, the affairs of the nation, to divert him; but marriage was the woman's sole interest; it was her life; consequently, when it was a failure, she either became peevish and ill-tempered, or sank unto a stupor of indifference.

The sacrificing of girls to old or dissolute husbands, whom they disliked, either produced that patient Griselda type of woman, who has been so much admired (whether rightly or wrongly is a matter of opinion), or caused wives, whose ideals of virtue were not so high, to become unfaithful, and thus to bring down misery and shame upon themselves, and their families.

SECTION IV.

The Influence of Woman on Seventeenth Century
Literature.

It is our intention in this section to consider the influence of woman on the chief works of the best seventeenth century writers; and also to take some notice of the pamphlet literature of the day.

Woman has always been a source of inspiration for good or evil to man; her influence on life and art has been great. The majority of literary men, especially the dramatists, of any period have turned to the women of their own time for inspiration: some good woman, slightly idealised perhaps, has sat for the portraits of their heroines; and their Delilahs have had their living counterpart. It has been shown, that the seventeenth century woman was in many cases slighted and scorned: this treatment had its influence on her character, and consequently on her representation in literature. But if this century cannot give us a Viola or a Desdemona, it has given us a Camiola, a Calantha, an Eve and a Mercy.

(a) Drama.

There are but few really great women in the plays of this period: the dramatists had a false idea of morality and virtue; and their heroines are brittle and painted; the atmosphere of the court clings to them. There are exceptions; but these are not women, but personifications of chastity; they are chiselled in stone; and, instead of awakening our sympathy, they leave us cold.

The post-Shakespearian drama, brilliant as it is, is somewhat disappointing: after the men and women that Shakespeare brought on the stage, the "humours" of Jonson and the puppets of Beaumont and Fletcher are unconvincing. The female characters are not generally as well realised as the male; few of the dramatists seem to have known much about women, or if they had the knowledge, they could not reproduce it faithfully.

In treating the work of each dramatist separately, we are faced with a difficulty: the early seventeenth century was an age of collaboration; and it is often impossible to assign plays or parts of plays to the right author. We shall follow the generally accepted view about doubtful plays; and in the case of a play, which is

evidently the work of several authors, we shall consider it as the work of the one, who seems to have written the greatest part of it.

With one exception Beaumont and Fletcher have failed to create women, who live in our memory. Their heroines are either simple, even silly, or sprightly and shallow; their bad women could scarcely be more disgusting.

The exception is the citizen's wife in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*. Here we have a delightful picture of the early seventeenth century citizen woman. She has all the confidence in herself and her husband that befits the wife of a prosperous grocer; she is not shy in the presence of the gallants on the stage; and talks to them freely: "Fie, this stinking tobacco kills me! would there were none in England! Now I pray, gentlemen, what good does this stinking tobacco do you? Nothing, I warrant you: make chimneys o' your faces!" She remembers her manners however: "By your leave, gentlemen all, I'm something troublesome: I'm a stranger here: I pray you, bear with me;" and again at the close of the play, when her husband wants to hurry her away: "Nay, by my faith, George, I have more manners than so: I'll speak to these gentlemen first"

She is evidently quicker witted than her husband; he wants the play improving; but it is she, who suggests how it shall be done. Nevertheless her ignorance and simplicity are great. Her interest in the play and her excitement grow to such an extent, that like a child on its first visit to the theatre, she believes everything to be real; and she is as concerned about the feigned adventures of the actors, as she would be about the affairs of her neighbours. Although her husband occasionally has the same feeling, at other times he realises that it is all "make believe".

Wife "Come hither, Master Humphrey, has he hurt you?"

Now, beshrew his fingers for't. Here, sweetheart, here's some green ginger for thee. Now, beshrew my heart, but 'a has peppernel in 's'head, as big as a pullet's egg! Alas! sweet lamb, how thy temples beat! Take the peace on him, sweetheart, take the peace on him"

Citizen "No, no; you talk like a foolish woman: I'll ha' Ralph fight with him, and swinge him up well favouredly"

She is willing to help any of the characters out of their difficulties; even Jasper, whom she dislikes, because "he chops logic with his mother", she is unwilling shall be worse thought of than his conduct warrants.

Wife. No, indeed, Mistress Merrythought; though he be ^a ~~is~~

notable gallows, yet I'll assure you his master did turn him away, even in this place; 'twas, i'faith, within this half-hour, about his daughter; my husband was by"

Citizen "Hang him rogue! he served him well enough; love his master's daughter! By my troth, cony, if there were a thousand boys, thou wouldst spoil them all with taking their parts; let his mother alone with him"

Wife "Ay, George; but yet truth is truth".

When Michael complains of the chilblains her sympathy is at once ready: "Faith, and those chilblains are a foul trouble", she exclaims; and proceeds to give an infallible remedy for them. Her pride in Ralph could hardly have been greater, had he been her own son and she is convinced that he will do notable things; but, when he is knocked down by Jasper, her woman's fear obtains the mastery and, instead of bidding him get up and fight, she cries, "Run, Ralph, run Ralph, run for thy life, boy; Jasper comes, Jasper comes!" She shows that combination of superstition and shrewdness common to women of her class:

Merrythought "Never trust a tailor that does not sing at his work; his mind is of nothing but filching."

Wife "Mark this, George; 'tis worth noting; Godfrey my tailor, you know, never sings, and he had fourteen yards to make this gown: and I'll be sworn, Mistress Penistone

the draper's wife had one made with twelve" [She evidently N
 has a great affection for her husband, but when she sees
 the unquenchable cheerfulness of Merrythought, she, woman-
 like, begins to think that George shows a little room for
 improvement.]

"Look, George; how say'st thou by this, George? is't not
 a fine old man? Now God's blessing o' thy sweet lips!
 When will thou be so merry George? faith, thou art the
 frowningest, little, thing when thou art angry, in a
 country."

It is a pity, that the women in the other plays of
 Beaumont and Fletcher are not as well drawn as the citizen's
 wife. Panthea¹ and Arethusa² are graceful figures; but
 they have no life nor individuality. Euphrasia³ is silly.
 She dresses in men's clothes; and assumes the name of
 Bellario through love for Philaster, to whom she attaches
 herself as a page. He sends her to wait upon the lady
 whom he loves, Arethusa, who is pleased with her prettiness;
 and makes much of her. Scandal is ever busy in courts;
 and Arethusa is accused of an unholy love for Bellario.
 Philaster believes the report, as easily as lovers do in
 plays; and the trouble begins. After a number of
 dangerous adventures, which might have caused the death

1 A King and No King

2 & 3 Philaster.

of one, or of all three of the principal characters, Euphrasia is forced to disclose her sex; and the princess is cleared. All the trouble might have been stopped at the beginning, had Euphrasia broken her silence; and there seems to have been no reason for her not doing so, except sheer naughtiness. Instead of appealing to our sympathy, as the authors evidently intended her to do, she irritates us; and we feel that we should like to shake her. She is meant to represent the pathetic picture of a maiden, true to her secret love and her vow; but instead of pathos we find absurdity.

The plot of *The Wild Goose Chase* is not pleasing to modern taste. Beaumont and Fletcher did not see anything degrading in the pursuit of Mirabel by Oriana; if it were not for the sympathetic treatment of the latter, we should be inclined to regard the whole play as a satire; but it is evident that Oriana is meant to be a heroine. To the seventeenth century mind there was nothing displeasing in the sight of a woman pursuing a man with the purpose of marrying him; marriage was her vocation in life; and it was as creditable to her to gain a husband, as it is to the modern woman to obtain means of a livelihood. It seems scarcely possible that Mirabel and Oriana would be happy together, when married;

but that was a matter of secondary importance. "The airy daughters of Nantolet" make themselves absurd in their efforts to appear attractive.

There is good work in *The Maid's Tragedy*; it might have been a great play, had Evadne's character been more convincing. Her repentance is unnatural. When she tells Amintor of her sin, she does so calmly, not because she does not realise the enormity of it, but because she is bold and impudent. The way, in which Melantius forces her to confess to him, instead of making her repentant, as the authors state it does, would have driven a woman of her character to revenge on her brother and Amintor, and to deeper sin with the king. More ought to have been said of her growing love for Amintor; it would have accounted for her repentance; but we do not hear of it, until she appears with the blood-stained knife in her hand; and her vengeance is complete. She is good in the murder scene; but she speaks as if the king alone had sinned, whereas she too is guilty:

King "How's this, Evadne?"

Evadne "I am not she; nor bear I in this breast
So much cold spirit to be call'd a woman.
I am a tiger; I am anything
That knows not pity. ~~Stir~~ Stir not! If thou dost
I'll take thee unprepared, thy fears upon thee,

That make thy sins look double; and so send thee,
(By my revenge, I will) to look those torments
Prepared for such black souls"

King. "Thou dost not mean this; 'tis impossible:
Thou art too sweet and gentle"

Evadne "No, I am not.
I am as foul as thou art, and can number
As many hells here. I was once fair,
Once I was lovely; not a blowing rose
More chastely sweet, till thou, thou, thou
foul canker,
(Stir not) didst poison me. I was a world of
virtue,
Till your surst court and you (Hell bless you
for't)
With your temptations on temptations,
Made me give up mine honour; for which, king,
I'm come to kill thee"

.....
King "Evadne, pity me.

Evadne. Hell take me then! This for my lord Amintor!
This for my noble brother! and this stroke
For the most wronged of women"

Aspatia is meant to be pathetic; probably she appeared
so to the seventeenth century mind. Her conduct is such,
as one might expect from a sentimental love lorn girl
with no mental robustness, nor maidenly pride. It is
idle to pity her: she is happy when feeding her grief
and making everyone around her uncomfortable. Her words
to Amintor, on his bridal night, are calculated to make

him miserable for some time to come:

"Go, and be happy in your lady's love.
 May all the wrongs that you have done to me,
 Be utterly forgotten in my death!
 I'll trouble you no more, yet I will take
 A parting kiss, and will not be denied.
 You'll come, my lord, and see the virgins weep
 When I am laid in earth, though you yourself
 Can know no pity. Thus I wind myself
 Into this willow garland, and am prouder
 That I was once your love, though now refused,
 Than to have had another true to me.
 So with my prayers I leave you, and must try
 Some yet - unpractised way to grieve and die"

← Amintor was certainly to blame for deserting her; ^{not NP/}
 but the cruelty of his conduct does not excuse Aspatia's
 selfishness. Her death is the climax of absurdity.
 She finds that she cannot grieve herself dead, so dressed
 in men's apparel, she fights a duel with Amintor, in
 order that he may kill her:

"Those threats I brought with me sought not revenge;
 But came to fetch this blessing from thy hand.
 I am Aspatia yet"

The minor female characters in these plays are
 generally unpleasing; Megra¹ and Dula² are disgusting.

There is but little to be said about Jonson's women.
 The majority of them are merely lay figures, endowed with

1 Philaster.

2 The Maid's Tragedy

qualities, which are supposed to be peculiarly feminine; they have no hearts, nor thoughts, nor feelings; they are merely painted puppets. Apart from their lack of vitality they are unpleasing; a puppet may be gracious and beautiful; but Jonson's female characters are neither.

He is most successful in his portraits of lower class women. Ursula¹, the pig woman, Polish² the parasite and Keep³, the nurse, vulgar as they are, are to some extent human. A few others are worthy of mention. Lady Politick Wouldbe⁴ is an amusing picture of an English lady on the Continent; she is given several of the supposed feminine weaknesses, such as a love of dress, and a long tongue, to make her the semblance of a woman. Dol Common⁵ is a worthy colleague of Subtle and Face; Mistress Otter⁶ is an amusing shrew; Grace Wellborn⁷ is a sensible woman; and Pleasance⁸ is a pretty affectionate girl.

Celia⁹ is too pathetic a figure to be in a comedy: Jonson has made but a slight sketch of her; but he has succeeded in arousing our sympathy; she is a patient, gentle and virtuous girl tied to an avaricious and detestable husband.

Mrs Frances Fitzdottrel¹⁰ is the sole female character, who calls for detailed attention. She is more alive than any other woman in Jonson's plays. It is her misfortune to be wedded to that prince of gulls, Fabian

1 Bartholomew Fair
2 & 3 The Magnetic Lady
4 Volpone
5 The Alchemist

6 The Silent Woman
7 Bartholomew Fair
8 The Magnetic Lady
9 Volpone
10 The Devil is an Ass

Fitzdottrel; and, although, or perhaps because, she is an eminently sensible person, she makes a virtuous and an obedient wife. She is not a meek, patient woman, who obeys her husband's most foolish command without question; but she is a woman, who might make even Fabian Fitzdottrel act sensibly, if he would be ruled by her. She tries to dissuade him from fresh acts of foolishness:

"Are you not enough
The talk of feasts and meetings, but you'll still
Make argument for fresh?"

but, when he reveals to her his prospects of being made the Duke of the Drown'd Lands, she begins to think that it is hopeless to try to alter him; and says, with a sigh, "you have strange phantasies".

Her strong commonsense makes her scorn the conversation of the supposed Spanish lady, who fascinates Lady Tailbush and Lady Eitherside; and, when her husband tells her how he has spent time and money to make his wife a fine lady, she replies curtly, "To make a fool of her". It is surprising that one of Jonson's heroines should act as she does towards Wittipol; but her conduct towards him is in keeping with her character. The following speech shows her honesty and shrewdness, the chief characteristics of her nature:

"I am a woman

That cannot speak more wretchedness of myself
 Than you can read; match'd to a mass of folly,
 That every day makes haste to his own ruin;
 The wealthy portion, that I brought him, spent,
 And through my friends' neglect, no jointure made me.
 My fortunes standing in this precipice,
 'Tis counsel that I want, and honest aids;
 And in this name I need you for a friend;
 Never in any other; for his ill
 Must not make me, sir, worse".

Maid Marian is a charming woman in a delightful play;
 and we are sorry that we do not see more of her and that
 Jonson did not finish the most pleasing of all his
 productions.

Dekker cannot be called post-Shakespearian: much
 of his work was contemporary with Shakespeare's. We
 have hesitated whether to include him in this survey or
 not; and at last we have decided that we cannot omit
 him, partly because the greater part of his work is
 seventeenth century in date, but chiefly because his
 heartiness and good nature appeal to us. We regret that

the consideration of his male characters is not within the scope of this thesis. Simon Eyre¹, compared with whom Merrythought is a foolish exaggeration, is the very incarnation of jollity. His wife, Margery, though not so lovable is eminently entertaining. Dekker has drawn in her an excellent, if slightly conventional, picture of a foolish woman. Her foolishness does not exceed the bounds of reality: she is a woman, whose small natural intelligence and abilities have received no training to foster them: probably Simon married her, because her helpless prettiness appealed to him; but, unfortunately, her foolishness increased with her years and her husband's prosperity. She is delighted when Simon is made mayor, chiefly because she can boast a more important husband than her citizen acquaintances "Fine? By my troth sweetheart, very fine! By my troth, I never liked thee so well in my life sweetheart, but let that pass. I warrant there be many women in the city have not such handsome husbands, but only for their apparel; but let that pass too"

She is anxious to sustain the dignity of her position as mayoress; and naturally her first thought is that she must wear clothes suitable to her new role:

"Art thou acquainted with never a farthingale maker, nor a

1 The Shoemaker's Holiday.

French hood maker? How shall I look in a hood I wonder! Perdy, oddly I think..... It is very hot, I must get me a fan, or else a mask." She is rather concerned that her husband, tiresome man, should have no greater sense of decorum than to remain as jolly and free as ever he was. "He must learn to put on more gravity", she says; and we can imagine her nodding and frowning at him to give emphasis to her words. Simon's reply is characteristic: "Peace Maggie, a fig for gravity!"

Foolish people invariably find consolation for the griefs of others in platitudes; and the more foolish they are, the less applicable is the platitude, that they utter. Margery's words to Ralph, when he is mourning the loss of his wife, are the very essence of comfortable stupidity:

"And so, as I said - but Ralph, why dost thou weep? Thou knowest that naked we came out of our mother's womb and naked we must return; and therefore thank God for all things."

[Jane, Ralph's wife is a complete contrast to Margery. She is overcome with grief, when her husband is forced to go to the wars: "O let him stay, else I shall be

undone". But, greatly as she feels the separation, she is too practical to give herself up to sorrow; she asserts her independence; leaves the care of Margery; and supports herself by sewing: "I cannot live by keeping holiday"

When at length she is persuaded that her husband is dead, she is willing to marry Hammon, simply because she does not much care what becomes of her, and because she is grateful to him for his supposed kindness. When Ralph returns on her second wedding morning, she can scarcely believe that it is he; but, when she recognises him, her joy is too deep to show itself in noisy exclamations.

Dekker evidently either had but little sympathy with those obedient maidens, who married according to their parents' wishes and against their own inclinations, or his gentle and pleasure loving nature dare not contemplate "the heart-breakings of miserable maids, where love's enforced; for he makes both Rose¹ and Infelice² outwit their fathers; and marry the men, whom they loved. Neither of these heroines have much individuality: Rose is sprightly; and Infelice is gentle and almost entirely colourless, except in the scene where she taxes Hippolito with his unfaithfulness, and where her ideas

1. Shoemaker's Holiday.
2. The Honest Whore.

are surprisingly in advance of her time.

¹
 Bellefront's conversion is too sudden. Although she led an immoral life, more from necessity than from choice, we can scarcely believe that the upbraidings of Hippolito, a stranger to her, would have power to change her life and to give her the determination to continue in that change. However, she is a noble character, when she has reformed. When her husband is in trouble, she forgets that it was he, who first led her into sin; and remembers only that he loved her in the days of his prosperity. She resists the blandishments of Hippolito; and remains true in word and deed to her husband; and tries to wean him from his associates "the roaring boys";

"How wild is his behaviour! Oh I fear
 He's spoiled by prison, he's half damned comesthere;
 But I must sit all storms; when a full sail
 His fortunes spread, he loved me, being now poor,
 I'll beg for him, and no wife can do more"

← She is entirely unselfish; and grieves not for the ^{not} poverty, that he brings upon her, but for the ruin, that he is doing to himself.

Dekker's other female characters are not as well realised as those we have noticed; but few of them are displeasing. ² Winnifred is another woman, who reforms after marriage; and she too makes a loving and faithful wife;

1 The Honest Whore.

2 The Witch of Edmonton

Katherine¹ and Susan¹ are pleasant girls; Agripyné² is spoiled by her position and the flattery of her suitors; and Mother Sawyer,¹ driven to become a witch by the unjust accusation of the stupid country folk, is a poor ignorant old woman, who is to be pitied.

Although Dekker's characterisation is sometimes weak, on the whole his women are human: he does not make them monsters of iniquity nor miracles of virtue; and he treats them in his gentle kindly way without scorn and bitterness.

A great contrast to the genial Dekker is Thomas Middleton, who produced a number of farcical comedies, a strong tragedy and one great play. He has little moral sense, no kindness and a coarse humour. [The women in his comedies are, almost without exception, too disgusting to be amusing. The plot of *The Widow* has been described as "unusually ludicrous"³: we fail to see the humour of it. The efforts of Philippa (married to an old and exacting husband) to gain a lover, whom does not matter, if he be handsome and witty, may be amusing; to us they are absurd. Philippa⁴ has not a spark of life, she is a type of woman that is often seen in the seventeenth century drama; her idleness is her curse; the necessity of engaging in work of some kind would keep her from mischief. Valeria is witty and sensible, quite

1 *The Witch of Edmonton*.

2 *Old Fortunatus*.

3 *The Age of Shakespeare*. Vol 11

4 Compare with Laetitia in *The Old Bachelor* by Congreve and with Elvira in *The Spanish Friar* by Dryden.

an exemplary character amongst widows, who are generally represented as the worst of women. The female characters in *The Witch* are no better: Isabella is silly; Francisca is spiteful and coarse; and the Duchess is drawn on lines that are too conventional to be convincing. If Jane in *A Fair Quarrel* is supposed to be virtuous, our ideas of virtue have altered since the days of *Middleton*. *Maudlin*¹ is not a particularly successful picture of a citizen's wife, especially when compared with the citizen's wife in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* and with Margery Eyre; Moll¹ is a pleasant shrewd young person; Clara² betrays a surprising lack of sensibility; Mary Fitzallard³ is colourless; but Pretiosa² is a delightful child, fresh, merry and innocent.

The kindly treatment of Cut-Purse Moll in *The Roaring Girl* is probably due to Dekker, who collaborated with Middleton in that play. Moll is represented as a bluff, honest, happy, rollicking creature, a far different person from the actual Mary Frith. Her manly spirit cannot endure the restrictions placed upon her sex; therefore she dons men's clothes; and enjoys a greater freedom than is possible to an ordinary woman. She can fight her own battles: when Laxton insults her, she arranges to meet him, fights a duel with him, wounds him, and reads him a

1 A Chaste Maid in Cheapside.

2 The Spanish Gipsy

3 The Roaring Girl.

lecture on his disgraceful conduct.

Her sentiments are creditable:

"Base is that mind that kneels unto her body,
As if a husband stood in awe on's wife!
My spirit shall be mistress of this house
As long as I have time in't."

She is determined not to marry, until she sees

"Honesty and truth unslandered;
Women manned but never pandered"

"This sounds like doomsday" says Lord Noland; we should be inclined to agree with him, if we considered Middleton's comedies true representation of life.

Women beware Women is not at all a pleasant play; but it has a lurid force and much dramatic power. Livia the evil genius of all women, whose misfortune it is to meet with her, is a middle-aged widow. Her unctuous tongue incites her niece Isabella to commit a dreadful sin; and transforms her from a pretty innocent girl into a heart-broken woman, loathing herself and her own sex, and most of all Livia: her wiliness entraps Bianca; and makes her the vain shameless mistress of the Duke, instead of the contented, affectionate, if somewhat thoughtless wife of LeantiO: she ruins three households by her crafty and atrocious scheming. It is hard to imagine how anyone

can be so filthily wicked; but Middleton's picture of Livia is powerful; and bears the impress of truth. We cannot say whether such women exist, or have existed: we are told that it is so; but, if this statement is true, it must be confessed that Messalinas are rare: we fail to see what benefit either art or life derives from the portrayal of them.

Beatrice Joanna in *The Changeling*, Middleton's great play, is a much more human character. Haughty, impetuous, and headstrong, she is ignorant of life and the ways of the world. She is too absorbed in herself to realise the depth of De Flores passion for her. The man is loathsome to her; and she treats him with abhorrence, until she thinks that she can make use of him. He is poor and shabby and, she believes, unscrupulous; therefore he is a fit tool to employ into the murder of her unwelcome suitor Alonzo. She congratulates herself on her stratagem: "I shall rid myself, of two inveterate loathings at one time." It does not occur to her, in the pride of her youth and beauty, that she is making herself an accomplice with De Flores in a dreadful crime. Alonzo is in the way; he must be removed, she thinks in her imperious

manner; De Flores is the man to do it; she will be gracious to him, and pay him well; he will leave the country; and she will be free to marry Alsemero. That De Flores should presume to be familiar with her, because she has graciously condescended to make use of him, is beyond the range of her belief. When he exultingly demands her honour as his reward her surprise is overwhelming. "Why 'tis impossible thou canst be so wicked", she exclaims. Her yielding to him has been criticised as a flaw in characterisation. We do not agree with this criticism. Certainly she could have defied him, probably successfully, had it occurred to her to do so; but the sudden revelation of his motive makes her realise what she has done. For the first time she sees herself as the accomplice of a brutal villain in a cold blooded murder; she has fallen from the high pedestal, on which she placed herself; she is no longer Beatrice Joanna, the beautiful daughter of the Governor of the Castle, but an associate of the broken down De Flores; all her little world is shattered and she, the queen of it, is dethroned. The horror of the thing takes possession of her senses; she is terrified and bewildered. ^{she} She is no scheming, crafty woman, but an ignorant impetuous girl: concealment must be purchased at any cost: frantically

she offers De Flores more money; he refuses it with scorn and gloats over her distress; his attitude is that of a man, who has triumphed, to whom no shadow of defeat is possible; his confident exultation sweeps her off her feet; she has not the power to resist him. Afterwards her sole thought is concealment; she plunges desperately and blindly into deceit and crime emeshing herself more closely with every fresh effort to hinder detection, in a net of circumstances, from which there is no escape. She is true to her character at the last; and wildly denies everything when all is proved, beyond the shadow of a doubt.

Heywood's pictures of middle class home life are interesting; and some of his characters are well realised. It is a pity that he generally fails in his delineation of women. Lucrece¹, in that medley of stories taken from Livy, is not a human being but a statue of chastity. Gratiana² is a mere outline: Luce² is a fairly pleasant but conventional type of citizen girlhood: the wife of Wincott³ is sprightly; but she is merely an animated puppet; her fall is in no way explicable: Bess Bridges⁴ is certainly pleasing; her character is drawn on broad lines; she is an honest, buoyant lass, affectionate and capable, with a good head for business.

The women in his best play, A Woman killed by Kindness, are better drawn, although the figure of Nan is generally

1 The Rape of Lucrece.
3 The English Traveller

2 The Wise Woman of Hogsdon
4 The Fair Maid of the West

thought to be a vacillating outline. It is difficult to know what type of woman Heywood meant Nan to be; if he wished to represent her as a weak childish woman without that appealing charm, which some weak women possess, he has to some extent succeeded. She is foolishly excited about trifles:

"O Master Frankford, Master Wendoll here

Brings you the strangest news that e'er you heard"

Her efforts to act as befits Master Frankford's wife are ridiculous:

"As far as modesty may well extend

It is my duty to receive your friend"

Her essential weakness of character makes her fall quite probable and easy; she herself confesses that she sinned through "want of wit." When her sin is discovered, she is more troubled about the probable punishment thanⁿ about the misery that she has caused. Her words to her husband, when he is frantic with sorrow, show that she has not power to grasp the situation:

"Mark not my face

Nor hack me with your sword; but let me go

Perfect and undeformed to my tomb"

She has not ~~the~~ strength of will enough to atone for her misdeeds by living a good and useful life, and by

resolutely bearing the ignominy, that her sin has brought upon her. It is easier for her to die; it also appears more creditable; and is more likely to awaken the sympathy of those virtuous people, who, would scorn her, if she attempted to live out her repentance; therefore she gives herself up to repinings; and grieves herself sick. It is possible that Heywood saw Nan in a different light; evidently he meant her to be pathetic in the closing scene, where she seems to us rather mawkish and sentimental.

The character of Susan has been somewhat neglected. Although Heywood sometimes fails in his delineation of her, yet on the whole she is sweet and womanly. When misfortunes overtake her brother Charles, she does not blame him; and willingly helps him in every way that she can; but she cannot forbear sighing for their former ease and comfort:

"O brother, here's a change,
 Since old Sir Charles died, in our father's house"
 She puts aside her own feelings for the sake of her brother:
 "I was not born a beggar, though his extremes
 Enforce this language from me: I protest
 No fortune of mine own could lead my tongue
 To this base key"

We cannot believe, however, that she would allow Charles, through a mistaken sense of honour, to offer her to Acton as

as a payment of his debt; this scene is unnatural and strained.

Cicely, Mrs Frankford's maid, is pert and amusing; she is an interesting picture of a giddy, yet rather shrewd young person. She knows that Nicholas dislikes Wendoll; and therefore she says, "Nich'las, where are you Nich'las? you must come in Nich'las and help the young gentlemen off with his boots". She is a woman, who delights in the possession of a secret, which she half tells by mysterious hints; and thus whets the curiosity of her listener; and makes herself appear a person of importance. She suspects the sin of her mistress; and is pleased with the opportunity that it gives her of mystifying her fellow servants: we can imagine her shaking her head and pursing up her lips as she says, "Mum; there's an old proverb - when the cat's away, the mouse may play..... I am neither a pillow nor a bolster, but I know more than both"

Webster has given us a living portrait of a great woman in the heroine of *The Duchess of Malfi*: the strength of her character and the nobility of her nature place her far above any woman in the dramas, that we have yet mentioned: she is not without her weaknesses; but these

make her human; and are of such a kind, that serve to endear her to us. She is capable of a deep and passionate love: she is not one to pass her life "in maiden meditation fancy free": Antonio winds himself round her heart strings; and she takes him for her husband. Her feelings towards him are not only those of a wife, but those of a parent too: she guards and protects him with motherly care. It is she who acts in an emergency: upon the discovery of her marriage by her brother Ferdinand, fearing danger, she sends Antonio to a place of safety; and, to cover the reason of his departure, she pretends that she has dismissed him for unfaithful stewardship. Her officers, thinking to please her, blame him: "Leave us!" she cries. Bosola who suspects the real state of affairs begins to praise Antonio; her heart responds, although her tongue belies it; but at last the sweetness of Bosola's words weaken her judgment and make her betray her secret.

Duchess "O, you render me excellent music"

Bosola "Say you?"

Duchess "This good one that you speak of is my husband!" She can jest, when her feelings are deepest, and in time of great danger; it is as though she feared to give rein to her emotions. She is shrewd enough to perceive the double meaning in Ferdinand's letter, which purports to

be friendly to her and Antonio; the irony of it appeals to her:

Duchess (reads) "Send Antonio to me; I want his head in
a business.

A politic equivocation;

He doth not want your counsel, but your head;

That is, he cannot sleep till you be dead.

And here's another pitfall that's strewed o'er

With roses; mark it, 'tis a cunning one.

"I stand engaged for your husband for several debts
at Naples: let not that trouble him; I had rather have his
heart than his money"

And I believe so too"

When there comes the moment of parting with her husband
and her eldest child, she feels the separation far more
keenly than Antonio, who tries to console her by a well
meant, but foolish platitude:

Duchess "I know not which is best,
To see you dead; or part with you. - Farewell, boy
Thou art happy that thou hast not understanding
To know thy misery; for all our wit
And reading brings us to a truer sense
Of sorrow. - In the eternal church, sir
I do hope we shall not part this"

Antonio "O be of comfort!
Make patience a noble fortitude,
And think not how unkindly we are used:

Man, like to cassia, is proved best being bruised. "
 Her proud spirit finds no comfort in such reflections, and
 her indignation at her hard fate breaks forth:

"Must I, like a slave born Russian,
 Account it praise to suffer tyranny?"

But this is only a momentary display of emotion; she
 braces herself to meet misfortune; and ironically attempts
 to find consolation by the very means, which she had
 scorned some little time before:

"But come, whither you please. I am armed 'gainst misery;
 Bent to all ways of the oppressor's will.
 There's no deep valley but near some great hill"

Her noble bearing during her imprisonment awakes the
 admiration of even Bosola:

"She's sad as one long used to't, and she seems
 Rather to welcome the end of misery
 Than shun it; a behaviour so noble
 As gives majesty to adversity:

You may discern the shape of loveliness
 More perfect in her tears than in her smiles.

She will muse four hours together, and her silence
 Methinks, expresseth more than if she spake"

She scorns the pretended friendly advances of Ferdinand
 and the hypocritical reverence of Bosola.

Bosola "All comfort to your grace!"

Duchess "I will have none!"

Pray thee, why dost thou wrap thy poisoned pills
In gold and sugar?"

Her defiant attitude remains to the last; and she
dies bravely, scorning her murderers.

Bosola "I am come to make thy tomb."

Duchess "Ha! my tomb!

Thou speak'st as if I lay upon my death bed
Gasping for breath: dost thou perceive me sick?"

Bosola "Yes, and the more dangerously since thy
sickness is insensible"

.....

Duchess "Am not I thy duchess?"

Bosola Thou art some great woman sure, for riot
begins to sit on thy forehead (clad in grey hairs)
twenty years sooner than on a merry milk-maid's.
Thou sleepest worse than if a mouse should be forced
to take up her lodging in a cat's ear: a little infant
that breeds its teeth, should it lie with thee, would
cry out, as if thou wert the more unquiet bedfellow."

Duchess. "I am the Duchess of Malfi still!"

Vittoria Corombona, in *The White Devil*, is an
entirely different woman from the Duchess of Malfi.
Unerrupulous and clever she is; beautiful and
fascinating she is supposed to be; but her charm

is not well realised; she is no Cleopatra, whose magnificent voluptuousness thrills even the dullest souls, but a blood-thirsty evil-minded woman, governed by a fickle lust for Brachiano, which has none of the passionate poetry of Cleopatra's love for Anthony.

Cornelia² is one of the few good old women in the seventeenth century drama. It is a thing to be noticed, when considering the position of woman, that the majority of old and middle-aged women in the fiction of this period are disgusting.¹

The literary men seem to have failed to see the charm of a good woman, when she had ripened into a matron, and when white hairs crowned her head; her charm for them ended with her youthful beauty; and, as she grew older, she degenerated into the worst kind of woman. This view is not true to the life of their time; they portray the exceptional women; and ignore the Mary Verneys, the Dorothy Osbornes and the Mrs Hutchinsons grown old. Cornelia has but little individuality, she is entirely and solely a mother; her emotions are confined to a mother's shame, a mother's grief, and a mother's love.

1 See Gratiana in The Revenger's Tragedy; Putana in 'Tis a pity she's a Whore; Gransis in The Broken Heart; Morosa in The Traitor; and Lady Touchwood in The Double Dealer.

2. The White Devil

Isabella¹ is supposed to be a model wife: Webster seems to think that she is worthy of all praise. She forgives her husband, who is an utter scoundrel, the worst of his sins; and hopes to win back his affection by her gentleness. She entreats her brother not to deal too harshly with him; and, when her husband refuses to be reconciled to her, she takes all the blame. She dies through kissing her husband's portrait, the lips of which have been poisoned. There are evidences in literature that women, like Isabella, have been greatly admired; they are held up as models of virtue and wifely forbearance. So great is the honour paid to them, that we are almost afraid to hint, that their gentle resignation to all ills has produced but little good; and has generally driven their husbands to greater excesses. There is something essentially irritating in the meek hopeless saintliness of a wronged woman to the one who has wronged her: had Isabella turned upon her husband and upbraided him for his faults, he would have admired her courage, even in his anger; and would have been more likely to reform through treatment of that kind than when she irritated him by her patient endurance, and made him loath her for her lack of spirit.

The women in Tournear's two gloomy tragedies are

1. The White Devil.

both improbable and disgusting.

The three chief dramatists, who continued to write until the closing of the theatres, were Massinger, Ford and Shirley. The first and last are interesting, because of their pictures of contemporary life; and Ford, whose work, in spite of its inequality, far exceeds theirs, is a searcher into the hearts of men and an analyst of their passions.

Although Massinger has given us *Camiola*, "that small and ravishing substance", many of his women are vulgar-minded and sensual; they are full of animal desires; they fall in love and out again as easily, as they change their clothes: they love with their eyes only; their sole aim in life is to make themselves as attractive as possible, and to gather admirers around them; even the supposedly virtuous ones remain virtuous only by painful and continuous efforts of self restraint. All the women in *The Roman Actor* are disgusting: *Domitia* becomes violently enamoured of the Actor *Paris*, when she has seen him but for a few minutes. *Dorothea* in *The Virgin Martyr*, supposed to be a miracle of all virtue, exclaims when *Antonius* is about to declare his love,

"If one immodest accent
Fly out, I hate you everlastingly":

were she really pure-minded, this would be the last thing that she would expect from her lover? Marcellia¹ a model of a virtuous wife, uses language which no modest woman would utter: and Aurelia² falls in love with Bertaldo at first sight, and does not scruple to tell him so.

Some probable studies of women he has given us, however: both Lidia³ and Fiorminda³ are pleasant, modest girls: Margaret⁴ is a shrewd, business-like young person, who does not allow her love for Allworth to make her ^{the} less practical: and Lady Allworth⁴ is a sensible, comely middle-aged woman, modest in her thoughts and language, and kind to her step-son.

The women in *The City Madam* have no individuality: they are "humours", fashioned on a type of woman, that grew up during the middle years of the century, and greatly increased in numbers after the Restoration. Lady Frugal, whose head has been turned by the title conferred upon her husband, a prosperous merchant, plays the fine lady; and trains her daughter to do the same. She is a foolish, vain, old woman, easily gulled by the absurd jargon of Stargaze, and ready to believe the grossest flattery:

"A tenant of hers

1 The Duke of Milan
2 The Maid of Honour

3 The Great of Florence
4 A New Way to Pay Old Debts

For saying only "Good young mistress help me,
To speech with your lady-mother", so far pleased her,
That he got his lease renewed for't".

She gives most sumptuous banquets, where butcher's meat
is never served, because the common people eat it; and she
dresses in clothes made of the most rare and exquisite
materials and in the latest fashion. Her daughters are
if anything more absurd than she is: "their dreams are
of being made countesses; and they take stake as they
were such already." + an on!

(Stargaze knowing their weaknesses, craftily predicts that
they shall have ascendancy over their husbands; they
immediately begin to assume airs of authority when address-
ing their suitors; and sensibly endeavour to come to an
understanding before marriage. Anne, whose hand is
sought by Sir Maurice Lacy, specifies the things, that will
be necessary to her existence, when she is his wife:

Anne "I require first,
And that, since 'tis in fashion with kind husbands,
In civil manners, you must grant, - my will
In all things whatsoever, and that will
To be obeyed, not argued"

Sir Maurice "This in gross contains all:
But your special items, lady"?

Anne When I am one,
 And you are honoured to be styled my husband,
 To urge my having my page, my gentleman usher,
 My woman, sworn to my secrets, my caroch
 Drawn by six Flanders mares, my coachman, grooms
 Postillion, and footmen."

Sir Maurice "Is there aught else
 To be demanded?"

Anne "Yes, sir, mine own doctor;
 French and Italian cooks, musicians, songsters,
 And a chaplain that must preach to please my fancy;
 A friend at court to place me at a masque;
 The private box ta'en up at a new play
 For me and my retinue; a fresh habit
 Of a fashion never seen before, to draw
 The gallants' eyes, that sit on the stage, upon me;
 Some decayed lady for my parasite
 To flatter me and rail at other Madams;
 An there ends my ambition."

Mary whose suitor is a gentlemen farmer, named Plenty, is
 even more extortionate in her demands than Anne:

Mary "I will receive your rents."

Plenty "You shall be hanged first"

Mary "Make sale or purchase; nay I'll have my neighbours
 Instructed, when a passenger shall ask,
 Whose house is this? (though you stand by) to answer
 The Lady Plenty's . Or who owns this manor?"

The Lady Plenty. Whose sheep are these, whose ozen?

The Lady Plenty's.

Camiola is a charming woman; her maidenly pride keeps her from confessing her love for Bertaldo, before he goes to the war; but, when he is a prisoner and in trouble, all her own feelings are put aside; she acts quickly and decisively; and sends the money to ransom him, with the offer of her hand in marriage. Perhaps it is this sudden capitulation that makes Bertaldo hold lightly that, which he so long desired; for he easily forgets Camiola; and falls a victim to the charms and importunities of Aurelia. According to the seventeenth century idea of propriety, at this crisis, Camiola should mourn and bewail her fate; and act as Aspatia does under similar circumstances; but Camiola is made of different metal; ~~she~~ ^{but} she is not revengeful and passionate; ~~although~~ her high spirit and courage will not brook such an injury without remonstrance. She interrupts the betrothal of Bertaldo and Aurelia; and brings home to her faithless lover the shame of his ingratitude and fickleness. He sees his conduct in a true light; repents; and is willing to marry Camiola. Again the proprieties of fiction are disregarded; we should expect Camiola to accept him joyfully with promises of life-long obedience

and devotion; but this action of her lover has made her realise, not without much painful questioning, that she is infinitely his superior; therefore she declares her intention of taking the veil; and Bertaldo inspired by the nobility and calm exaltation of her mind follows her example; and takes a vow of celibacy. Camiola is an unusual character to be the heroine of one of Massinger's ~~dramas~~^{plays}: her bright and lively charm, her high spirit, and the practical commonsense displayed in her actions, make her immeasurably superior to the majority of women in the seventeenth century drama.

Ford, more than any of his contemporaries, studied the workings of the minds of women. He was not satisfied with colourless, life-less heroines like Panthea¹, nor with "humours" like Lady Politick Wouldbe²; nor with brilliant dashing creatures like Millamant³, nor even with living, essentially human women like the Duchess of Malfi; he was a prober into the hearts of women; he laid bare their secret thoughts; he loved to picture them in some highly unusual, if not unnatural, situation; and to analyse the thoughts and passions, which arose within them. While we are conscious that Ford owes something of his success to the strange subjects, which his morbid nature and love of originality led him to seek, yet we are obliged to confess that ~~he~~ it is ^{he} who has given the world the subtlest and most

1 A King and No King

2 Volpone

3 The Way of the World

convincing pictures of women, that the seventeenth century produced.

His fame rests upon five plays. The women in two of these, Perkin Warbeck, and The Lover's Melancholy, are interesting; but they are not worked out with Ford's peculiar insight and genius. Lady Katherine Gordon is a pleasant picture of a devoted wife; she is altogether charming, except when she deserts Dalzell for Warbeck an action which is not in keeping with her character. Cleophila² is a loving and obedient daughter; but her sister Erocles², while we admire her spirit in running away from the man, who wished to ruin her, is most reprehensible in causing her old father so much anxiety. Thamasta² is haughty and ill-tempered; she is spoiled by her position and by the absurd deference paid to her by Menaphon. She falls violently in love with Parthenophil, whom she has seen but five minutes before; and boldly commands him to woo her; and is most indignant when he refuses:

"I am a princess,
And know no law of slavery; to sue yet be denied!"

Her ardour cools, however, on the disclosure of the sex of Parthenophil; and she condescends to marry Menaphon.

It is in Ford's three great tragedies, that we have

1 Perkin Warbeck

2 Lover's Melancholy

the best and worst of his work. The low comedy of the underplots and the extravagant touches of physical horror are great and indelible blots; but, in spite of these faults, he has succeeded in reaching the height of tragic intensity, and in laying before our gaze the tortured hearts of his heroines.

Love's Sacrifice is the history of an ardent, passionate woman, endowed with a rich and luxuriant beauty, and with the hot blood of the South in her veins. Raised from a lowly position to be the wife of the Duke of Pavia, Bianca is a queenly figure; but beneath the surface of her haughty dignity, lies the essential voluptuousness of her nature, which appeals to Fernando; and makes him think his suit will be granted. He is surprised and shaken in his belief, when Bianca repulses him; he leaves her; and retires to meditate with shame and fear upon his intended unfaithfulness to his friendship with the Duke. Bianca, left alone, realises to the full the call to her senses, which Fernando has offered her; in a guarded moment, when thoughts of duty and of the honour of her position lay heavily upon her, she refused his love; but now passion leaps like fire along her veins; and, heedless of everything else, she is ready to prostitute both duty and honour upon love's altar. Fernando, full of repentant

thoughts, is again surprised at Bianca's attitude; and his weaker nature shrinks and withers under the scorching fire of her passion; he is but a weak love sick youth, she is a reckless passion swayed woman. That Ford should celebrate these lovers as a miracle of chastity, shows how his moral sense was affected by the idea of virtue current in his time. The play is marred by the lameness of its conclusion.

Calantha is the central figure in *The Broken Heart*: while the gentleness and pathetic resignation of Penthea appeal to us, it is Calantha who awakens our admiration; and inspires our deepest sympathy. She is truly a princess: stately and gracious, she is not merely a charming picture, but a self-reliant and earnest woman; she has a wide knowledge of state affairs; and her ready intuition enables her to grasp the meaning of a situation in all its bearings; her duty is her first thought; and calmly and nobly she performs it, restraining her own feelings until it is done. The responsibilities of her position weigh heavily upon her, when love has touched her heart; and she finds the self control and calm demeanour, which is expected of her, a little irksome.

"A woman has enough to govern wisely
Her own demeanours, passions and divisions."

Her devotion to duty makes her appear somewhat cold; but her love for Ithoocles is all the deeper, because she gives but little expression to it. The responsibilities of ruling a kingdom she could and would have borne bravely; but the sorrow, which overtakes her, breaks her spirit; and she dies of a broken heart. She is calm and gracious to the last; her heroic self-restraint during the dance, when the news of the death of her father and her lover are brought to her, will always live in our memory. Her last thoughts are for her country; she leaves her inheritance in order before she dies. Calantha's was one of those quiet and self contained natures, which suffer all the more keenly, because they suffer in silence; many a weaker woman would have survived the sorrows, which were too great for her to bear.

In 'Tis a pity she's a Whore, Ford reached the greatest height of tragedy, that was possible to him. Annabella is the most tragic of all his heroines. She is a passionate child, who does not realise the enormity of her sin; she has only a vague sense of guilt; and, when Giovanni suggests that she must marry, she says quite innocently, that she will marry him.

Giovanni "But I shall lose you sweetheart"

Annabella "But you shall not"

Giovanni "You must be married mistress."

Annabella "Yes! to whom?"

Giovanni "Someone must have you"

Annabella "You must"

Bonaventura, the priest, terrifies her by his lurid descriptions of the hell, which he thinks she has merited; and, to save herself, she commits another sin by marrying Soranzo. The powerful scene, in which her husband denounces her, reminds us of Evadne's confession to Amintor; and illustrates the difference between the two women. Evadne tells Amintor of her sin boldly and calmly, because she is shameless. Annabella speaks of her guilt frankly, because she fails to grasp the feelings of Soranzo and the horror of her own crime.

Soranzo. "Darest thou tell me this?"

Annabella "O yes: why not?"

You were deceived in me; twas not for love
I chose you, but for honour: yet know this
Would you be patient yet and hide your shame
I'd see whether I could love you"

Soranzo begins to realise what a strange combination of

child and woman she is; and seeks to make her feel the poignancy of his grief; and so to realise her own guilt.

Annabella "I must confess I know you loved me well"

Soranzo "And wouldst thou use me thus? O Annabella,
 Be thou assured, who e'er the villian was
 That thus hath tempted thee, to this disgrace,
 Well he might trust, but never loved like me.
 He doted on the picture that hung out
 Upon thy cheeks, to please his humourous eye,
 Not on the part I loved, which was thy heart,
 And as I thought thy virtues."

Annabella "O my lord!

These words wounds deeper than your sword
 could do."

From this moment Annabella is a woman. She knows her crime; and she knows that she must suffer; but for Giovanni, the sharer in her guilt, she is still all tenderness; and she makes strenuous efforts to save him, but in vain. When she sees him standing over her with a dagger in his hand, she suffers the keenest pang of all: her heart cries out against death, death from the one, who is dearest to her in the world; her cry of "Brother, unkind!" fails to express the pitch of tragedy to which we are lifted: it is not often that Ford fails thus.

There is but little to be said about Shirley's women. He anticipates the writers of the Restoration comedy by his descriptions of the manners of his time; the women in his comedies have no individuality; they are pegs on which he hangs the threads of his plot and the descriptions of contemporary life; they are drawn from the outside; we know nothing of their thoughts and feelings. Violetta¹ and Penelope¹ are both witty and sensible girls; and Lady Bornwell² is a foolishly vain pleasure loving woman.

Oriana, in *The Traitor*, is a pathetic figure: she is cut to the heart, when Cosmo basely urges her to forget him, and to marry his friend Pisano:

Cosmo "I have no part in Oriana now"

Oriana "I've heard too much, do with me what you please:
I am all passive, nothing of myself
But an obedience to unhappiness"

[Amidea³ is Shirley's best woman. She has a right noble spirit; and prefers to suffer pain, even death, before dishonour. Yet she is not cold and passionless: her love for Pisano is not quenched by his desertion of her; she has no desire for revenge, nor does she bewail her fate in idle lamentations; but she bears her grief

- 1 ~~The Old Bachelor~~ The Witty Fair One.
2 The Lady of Pleasure
3. The Traitor

quietly and silently. She displays no emotion, except when she hears that Pisano is in danger of his life from her brother; and then her thoughts are all for her former lover; no selfish regret urges itself upon her; her anxiety is for his safety and happiness only.

The inferiority of the Restoration drama to that, which preceded it, is evident in nothing more than in the puppets, which replace the men and women of the earlier plays of the century. Dryden and the little school of dramatic poets, who followed him, of whom Otway is the chief, delighted in rant and the sound of fury; the majority of their heroes and heroines are dashing stage figures, who utter loud declamations; and who act contrary to all sense and reason; and as no one real person has ever acted since the world began. The writers of the later seventeenth century comedy, the most brilliant of whom is Congreve, made their characters, with a few exceptions subordinate to the customs and manners, which they illustrate; they come on to the stage labelled; and they follow, with undeviating truth, the plan, which is marked out for them.

The heroines of Dryden's heroic plays are fit mates for his heroes; they are gorgeous queenly figures, defying nature and common sense in their words and their actions;

sometimes acting their part with dignity; but more often making us smile at their absurdity. ¹Almahide is drawn on similar lines to Almenzor; ²Nourmahal is a little less absurd; and ³Almeyda is a shred more human than either of them.

Dryden was a little more successful with the female characters in his comedies. ⁴Palmyra is a pretty modest girl; ⁴Melantha is an amusing sketch of a court lady, who adores everything connected with the palace; and has a passion for the French language; ⁴Doralice is shrewd and witty; but ⁵Elvira is disgusting and unnatural.

All for Love is Dryden's best play; but his Cleopatra pales almost into insignificance, when compared with Shakespeare's creation. Octavia is a more convincing study; she is a good representation of an injured wife; ~~she~~ ^{and} utters one of the most pathetic speeches in Dryden.

"Look on these

Are they not yours? or stand they thus neglected
As they are mine? Go to him, children, go
Kneel to him, take him by the hand, speak to him,
For you may speak, and he may own you, too
Without a blush; and so he cannot all
His children. Go, I say and pull him to me
And pull him to yourselves, from that bad woman.
You, Agrippina, hang upon his arms

- 1 The Conquest of Granada
- 2 Aurengzebe
- 3 Don Sebastian
- 4 Marriage a la Mode
- 5 The Spanish Friar

And you, Antonio, clasp about his waist:
 If he will shake you off, if he will dash you
 Against the pavement, you must bear it, children,
 For you are mine, and I was born to suffer"

Thomas Otway is remembered as the author of *The Orphan* and *Venice Preserved*; the heroines of these two plays are both pathetic, if not tragic figures. The sorrows of Monimia, loving and beloved of Castalio, and deceived by Polydore, cannot fail to touch the hardest heart; but she herself lacks the interest of a Beatrice Joanna, or an Annabella, because her troubles do not spring from her own actions, but from a perverse fate. Belvidera would be more pathetic, if she were not irritating. It is impossible not to feel angry with her, when she makes a coward of her husband; there is no doubting her wifely affection; but her love is selfish; and she is jealous of the least thing, which distracts Jaffier's attention from her. She compares herself to the Roman Portia; but she is ^{an} entirely different ^{type of woman}; her reason, for wishing to know her husband's secret business, is not a desire to share his anxieties, and to help him; but simply a jealous curiosity. When Jaffier is despondent at the loss of his fortune, she certainly consoles and cheers him; but

though her sentiments are fine, she offers no sensible suggestions for the future: perhaps Otway thought it was unnatural for people to be practical on the stage.

"Oh, I will love thee, ev'n in madness love thee:
 Tho' my distracted senses should forsake me
 I'd find some intervals, when my poor heart
 Should swage itself, and be let loose to thine;
 Tho' the bare earth shall be our resting place
 Its roots our food, some cliff our habitation
 I'll make this arm a pillow for thy head,
 And as thou sighing liest and swell'd with sorrow,
 Creep to thy bosom, pour the balm of love
 Into thy soul and kiss thee to thy rest,
 Then praise our God, and watch thee till the morning"

The undoubted beauty of the above lines is marred by our knowledge of Belvidera's ultra-romantic temperament; had they been uttered in a moment of exaltation by a woman like the Duchess of Malfi, who could rise to the heights of poetry, but who could also act and act well when an emergency arose, we should have been able to appreciate them as they deserve. They are the key note of Belvidera's character; she is a foolishly fond wife, who is fit to be loved and petted; but who is a hindrance rather than a help to her husband.

In considering the later comedy of the seventeenth century it is possible to make one of two mistakes; either these plays may be regarded as true representations of the life of the country at that time, or they may be thought to portray a world, existing entirely and solely in the minds of those, who wrote them. The true view lies between these two. The comedies of Wycherley, Congreve, Vanbrugh and Farquhar do represent, no doubt in slightly exaggerated form, the life of their time; but it is the life of one small section of society, composed of people who tried to emulate the loose living of Charles II and his friends. Nevertheless, it is wrong to imagine, that the rest of the country still clung to the ideals, that had inspired their fathers in the days of Cromwell; the influence of the Court spread further than the circle of its devotees, who gathered around it: all classes of society were influenced to some degree by the change, which took place in the lives of the leaders of the nation.

Wycherley, with his delight in coarseness and immorality, has given us some of the worst characters in the whole of English literature. He has failed to produce a single good and noble woman; nor has he created one, in whom the seeds of goodness and nobility have

been warped by training or misfortune: all his heroines are vulgar, frivolous, and sensual to the core: Fidelity is his one attempt at drawing a good woman; and in the portrayal of her he has failed lamentably.

The Gentleman Dancing Master is undoubtedly humorous; Hippolito's efforts to gain an interview with a probable lover and to hinder detection, when she has accomplished the first part of her design, are amusing; but, although they may speak well for her wit, they betray the innate worthlessness of her character.

The plot of the Country Wife could scarcely be more disgusting; the female characters are such as we might expect from Wycherley; but there is certainly something ludicrous in the rustic ignorance of Margery Pinchwife, which outwits all the jealous precautions of her husband. The play was written at a time when it was becoming more and more fashionable for country gentlemen to bring their wives and families to winter in town; Margery is a caricature of some of those honest gentlewomen, who, having wearied of the mysteries of pie crust making, persuaded their husbands to let them see something of the gaieties of town life.

Widow Blackacre, with her green bags and papers, is a well known figure in *The Plain Dealer*; but the chief

interest of the play for us centres in Fidelity. Wycherley, not content with borrowing largely from Molière's *Misanthrope*, and with distorting all that he borrowed, must also filch Shakespeare's Viola; and degrade her, until she is but a coarse and vulgar shadow of the original. Fidelity, dressed in boys' clothes, is employed by Manly in his love making much in the same way as Orsino employs Viola; but Shakespeare is always careful to keep his heroine pure, and free from all contaminating experiences, in spite of the manifest danger of her disguise; Wycherley has no such care; Fidelity is an actor in scenes of a most disgusting character; and, instead of the sweet and womanly Viola, we have a picture of a weakly sentimental girl, corrupted by the society, in which she moves.

Congreve's comedies are greater in every way than those of Wycherley. He transports us to a gay heartless world, where the men's sole business in life is to pursue the women, and the women's to attract their pursuers; but, such is the glamour, that Congreve throws over his characters by the magic of his wit, that we are interested and entertained by his groups of lively, sparkling figures; and and can scarcely wish that they were less gay and more human. His women, heartless and frivolous as they are,

are generally pleasing; he has created one sinister woman, Lady Touchwood¹; and one, who is excessively foolish, Lady Flyant¹, but none, who are simply and solely disgusting and worthless. The much greater freedom in speech and manners, allowed to women, during this part of the century, is evident throughout his plays.

Araminta in *The Old Bachelor* is a true coquette, who keeps the admiration of her lover ever fresh by her pretended scorning of his advances. Her cousin Belinda is freer, gayer and more affected; she declaims against men, yet is pleased with their attentions; she has an eye to see the amusing side of life, and a tongue to describe it wittily.

Cynthia, the heroine of *The Double Dealer*, is a commonplace, practical person; but, if Congreve has failed to give her the sparkling charm of his other heroines, he has amply repaid us for that loss by the creation of Lady Froth; in her he has drawn^a delightfully satiric sketch of a literary woman: essentially a blue stocking, she is not merely a puppet; for she is made human by her self assurance and by her pride in everything, which is connected with herself, even in her husband, whom she is on the point of deserting for Brisk.

Mrs Foresight and Mrs Frail, in *Love for Love*, are well

¹ *The Double Dealer*

contrasted; the one, tied to an old husband, whom she thoroughly dislikes, sighs for freedom; and is galled by the bonds of marriage: the other is consumed with anxiety to gain any husband at any cost. Angelica is quite an agreeable, almost a charming girl; and Prue, though awkward and rustic, has no small share of shrewdness.

Congreve put his best work into *The Way of the World*; and Lady Wishfort and Millamant are his two most interesting women. Lady Wishfort is a foolish, irritable old woman, who is never satisfied with the existing state of affairs; and who always desires the exact opposite to what happens. Her vanity is encouraged by her waiting women; she delights to imagine herself as still young and fascinating; and is spiteful towards Millamant, because of her superior charms. The attentions of the opposite sex have still the power of making her jaded old heart flutter; and she almost falls a victim to her veneration of a title and her delight at the flatteries of the pseudo knight Waitwell. Millamant is the queen of coquettes; she rushes like a brilliant and erratic comet through the play; here and there we follow her dazzling figure; sometimes we seem to grasp her; but we never hold her. She is the most attractive, the most elusive of all Congreve's heroines, and the most heartless

too: she is undoubtedly one of the finest and most pleasing representations of a witty, sparkling and dashing stage heroine.

Vanbrugh's women are well differentiated; but they have not the sparkle of Congreve's creations; they are lacking in vitality.

Amanda¹ and Berinthia¹ are almost too severely contrasted: the former is a quiet, refined, appealing little woman, jealously fond of her husband; the latter is a gay, unscrupulous, yet fascinating widow. Miss Hoyden¹ is Congreve's Prue on a more detailed and elaborate scale.

Lady Brute, in *The Provoked Wife*, should appeal to our sympathy: she remains true to her husband, in spite of his cruel treatment and the continual temptations of Constant; yet she does not give the impression of being a chaste and injured wife; but appears as a heartless, conceited woman of the world; and, when she is overcome by her lover's entreaties, our only feeling is one of surprise that it did not happen sooner. Lady Fancyfull² is a female Lord Foppington, but is drawn on weaker and less spirited lines.

There is not a shade of distinction between Clarissa and Araminta, in *The Confederacy*: they are both the wives

1. *The Relapse*

2. *The Provoked Wife*

of rich citizens; and they both attempt to imitate ladies of quality by leading absolutely worthless and idle lives. Corinna⁴ is a lively precocious girl, whose eyes are dazzled by a glimpse at the great, gay world.

It is a pity that Vanbrugh did not finish *A Journey to London*: the fragment, that he has left, promises exceedingly well. *Lady Headpiece* is a clever study of a woman, who is desirous of social success; and pert little Betty is the worthy daughter of such a mother.

Farquhar's women have not much individuality: they are less sparkling than Congreve's, but more generally pleasing than Wycherley's. Angelica¹ and Constance² are both good and virtuous girls: Lady Lurewell¹ is but a feeble figure to be a snarer of men's hearts; and is surprisingly passive and free from rancour: Silvia³ acts the man boldly, but without the grace of a Rosalind.

(b) Poetry

The sonnet sequences of the Elizabethan age ^{gave} have place, in the seventeenth century, to the loose verses of the Cavalier poets. Instead of the extravagantly chivalrous attitude towards woman, seen in the poems of Spenser and Sidney, the greater part of the Caroline and Restoration

- 1 *The Constant Couple*
- 2 *The Twin Rivals*
- 3 *The Recruiting Officer.*
- 4 *The Confederacy*

lyrical poetry displays a frank sensuality. Donne, who had a great influence upon the love poetry of this period, was undoubtedly a sensualist. There were a few poets, like Habington, who sang the charms of platonic love; and others, like Carew, who could rise to the beauty of thought, expressed in the following stanza:

"But a smooth and stedfast mind,
Gentle thoughts and calm desires,
Hearts with equal love combined
Kindle never - dying fires;
Where these are not, I despise
Lovely cheeks or lips or eyes"

but the antiplatonic held the field.

[It is impossible in this thesis to consider each poet separately, and to try to extricate his real sentiments about woman, from the midst of loose expressions and coarse gibes, which custom allowed and demanded. Nor are many of these poets worthy of such treatment: their works were mere jeux d'esprit; and cannot be thought to express truly their own feelings. Their terms are interesting and significant, as illustrations of the general attitude towards woman, which is the subject of a previous section. N/

The Cavalier attitude towards woman has been sufficiently illustrated by the consideration of the heroines

of the drama: it yet remains to estimate her influence on the work of the greatest poet of the century, one who has essentially a Puritan, in the highest sense of the word, in thought and feeling, Milton.

Milton has suffered much detraction at the hands of energetic biographers, who have published unpleasant statements about his treatment of his daughters: also the fact, that he wrote the Divorce pamphlets is sufficient evidence to those, who have not read them, that he was an oppressor of women. The statements about his harshness to his daughters cannot be entirely refuted; but it is probable that they are exaggerated. His divorce pamphlets certainly show that he believed in woman's inferiority—he could scarcely believe otherwise, accepting literally, as he did, the words of the Bible, and seeing all around him traces of the inferiority of woman, which he did not attribute to the right cause, her inferior training and position—but if the pamphlets are evidences of Milton's belief in masculine domination, they also show that he fully realised the responsibilities of his superior position; and that he regarded woman with tenderness and admiration. This view is confirmed by a study of his poems.

The lady in *Comus* is a most charming figure. Her

calm thoughts, when she is left alone in the dark wood, are the witnesses of the purity and innocence of her girlhood. She fears no foe and believes

"That He, the Supreme Good, to whom all things ill
Are but as slavish officers of vengeance,
Would send a glistering guardian, if need were,
To keep my life and honour unassailed."

She follows Comus willingly, deceived by his shepherd's garb; she fears no danger from humble folk; yet she is not content to go with him, relying solely on her own strength and his kindness, until she has asked help of the Shepherd of Souls:

"Shepherd, I take thy word,
And trust thy honest-offered courtesy,
Which oft is sooner found in lowly sheds
With smoky rafters, than in tapestry halls,
And court of princes, where it first was named,
And yet is most pretended. In a place
Less warranted than this, or less secure
I cannot be, that I should fear to change it.
Eye me blest Providence, and square my trial
To my proportioned strength! Shepherd, lead on."

Her courage and her implicit trust in God do not forsake her in the hour of need. Secure in the strength of her strength of her virtue, and knowing that

"If virtue feeble were,

Heaven itself would stoop to her"

she defies Comus and his hellish rout. She is no mean champion of right; her indignation flashes forth at the unhallowed words of her tempter; and gives her the power to make him tremble:

She fables not. I feel that I do fear
Her words set off by some superior power;
And, though not mortal, yet a cold shuddering dew
Dips me all o'er, as when the wrath of Jove
Speaks thunder and the chains of Erebus
To some of Saturn's crew.

Eve has a gracious womanly charm. Milton is careful to make her inferior to Adam, whose first speech is concerned with God and the eternal mysteries of things, while her answer is merely a detailed description of her first meeting with him; but she is neither insipid nor displeasing. In her state of innocence she is like a gentle appealing child; her thoughts about God are vague, He is so far away; but Adam is near; and to Adam she looks in sweet submissiveness as the arbiter of her fate. Her strange dream troubles her: the fear that Adam is displeased troubles her more; but her tears are quickly kissed away.

"So cheered he his fair spouse; and she was cheered,
 But silently a gentle tear let fall
 From either eye, and wiped them with her hair:
 Two other precious drops that ready stood
 Each in their crystal sluice, he, ere they fell,
 Kissed as the gracious signs of sweet remorse
 And pious awe, that feared to have offended."

The influence of the dream is seen when Eve desires to work in the garden alone, away from Adam; this is the first sign of coquetry in her nature. She is indignant, when Adam points out the danger that might overtake her; she resents the aspersions cast upon her strength and firmness; and answers him in a speech, which shows that childlike as she is, she is a woman.

"Offspring of Heaven and Earth, and all Earth's lord!
 That such an enemy we have, who seeks
 Our ruin, both by thee informed I learn,
 And from the parting Angel overheard,
 As in a shady nook I stood behind,
 Just then returned at shut of evening flowers.
 But that thou shouldst my firmness therefore doubt
 To God or thee, because we have a foe
 May tempt it, I expected not to hear.
 His violence thou fear'st not, being such
 As we, not capable of death or pain,
 Can either not receive, or can repel.
 His fraud is, then, thy fear; which plain infers

Thy equal fear that my firm faith and love
Can by his fraud be shaken or seduced:"

Thoughts, which how found they harbour in thy breast,
Adam! misthought of her to thee so dear?

The flatteries of the serpent make but little impression
on Eve: she is shrewd enough to value them at what they
are worth:

"Serpent, thy overpraising leaves in doubt

The virtue of that fruit, in thee first proved
but what cannot be gained by flattery is accomplished by
exciting her curiosity: her next words are "But say
where grows the tree?" The tempter leads her to it; and
feigns surprise, when Eve says that she must not eat of
that tree. Her answer is simple and direct: she is like
a child repeating a lesson, which she has conned by
heart; but the meaning of which she has failed to grasp.

"Of the fruit

Of each tree in the garden we may eat;
But of the fruit of this fair tree, amidst
The Garden, God hath said "Ye shall not eat
Thereof, nor shall ye touch it, lest ye die!"

She listens however to the serpent's wiles; and muses
within herself upon the virtues of the tree: no harm has
befallen the serpent, she is curious, she is hungry, she
eats. The first sign of her fall is apparent when she
hesitates to tell Adam of the virtues of the fruit: her

love for him has now become selfish ; and at last she decides that he shall eat of the fruit, so that he may suffer death, if she must suffer it: she cannot lose him. When misery overtakes them, and Adam bewails his fate and rejects the condolences of Eve, her gentle heart is fit to break:

"Forsake me not thus, Adam! witness Heaven
 What love sincere and reverence in my heart
 I bear thee, and unweeting have offended
 Unhappily deceived! Thy suppliant
 I beg, and clasp thy knees; bereave me not
 Whereon I live, thy gentle looks, thy aid,
 Thy counsel in this uttermost distress,
 My only strength and stay."

The distress that she has caused is too great for her to witness, and suicide suggests itself to her as a way out of their difficulties; but Adam is less impetuous than she; and has greater strength to endure. She is spared the sight of future sorrow and joy of the world, which Michael shows Adam; but she is consoled in a dream with vague hopes of atoning for her sin in the future.

Dalila is a more human study than Eve, charming as Eve is there are times when she is but a shadow. Dalila is not a woman of high virtue; nor is she a thoroughly bad woman. Her love for her country is

overcome by the fascination, that Samson's strength and manhood cast over her; she does not love him; but his virility appeals to her: she is proud that she can claim this splendid specimen of manhood, the renowned Samson as her husband. Jealousy and envious fear lest his former wife shall entice him away, take possession of her; she feels that it would be no unwise thing to have power over Samson, to have him in subjection; then her wily countrymen come, and promise her fame and honour, if she will but deprive her husband of his strength, and so benefit her country and also bind him to her for ever. The results are very different from those, which she expected. Fame and honour she has; but Samson is estranged from her; he is not her willing prisoner; but is bound by the shameful chains of her countrymen. She visits him in his captivity, not because she wishes to gloat over his distress, but because of the fascination that he still has for her; her plea for forgiveness is scorned; and piqued at his repulse, she leaves him; and attempts to console herself and to irritate him by glorying in the honour, that will be paid to her, in future ages, by Philistine maidens, because she did not scruple to betray her husband for

the sake of her country.

(c) Prose.

Bunyan is the sole prose writer of importance, whose works show the influence of woman. A Puritan, like Milton, like him too, he has a great tenderness and sympathy for women. His sympathy for Mrs Badman is evident; but he has failed to make her as human as the women in *The Pilgrim's Progress*; she is as much a model of virtue as her husband is a type of utter depravity and wickedness. All the women, even the slightest sketches, in *The Pilgrim's Progress* are true to life: Christiana and Mercy are especially attractive and pleasing.

Christiana is a practical, hard-working motherly woman: her life has been full of domestic cares; and she has had but little time for dreams. She has depths in her nature, however, of which she is unaware: when her children have out-grown their infancy, and do not need so much of her care, thoughts of other things obtrude themselves upon her: she begins to think about her husband, and about the journey that he has accomplished; and she too begins to long for something deeper and fuller than the life, which she has been living. When the message from the King comes, she is filled with trembling delight; and prepares for her pilgrimage, fully aware of its dangers,

yet trusting in the glorious future assured to her. Her practical nature is evident all through the journey.

"Come" said Christiana, "will you eat a bit, a little to sweeten your mouths, while you sit here to rest your legs?" When Matthew is cured by Dr Skill's wonderful pills, Christiana thinks of making provision for possible illness in the future.

Christiana "But ~~you~~, sir", said she, "what is this pill good for else?"

Skill "It is an universal pill; it is good against all the diseases that Pilgrims are incident to; and when it is well prepared, it will keep good, time our of mind"

Christiana "Pray Sir, make me up twelve boxes of them; for if I can get these, I will never take other physic".

Very different from Christiana, and yet even more charming is the young and girlish Mercy. Hers is a gentle sensitive nature; she often feels unhappy because no special invitation came from the king to her; and her doubt about her reception at the other end of the journey troubles her much. So great is her fear of being sent back that, at the wicket gate, she falls down in a swoon. Even when she is quite assured that her pilgrimage is pleasing to the king she is a little hurt, when any special attention is paid to Christiana and not to her: she is not

envious, only a little sad and doubtful.

Christiana "I have here a piece of pomegranate, which Mr Interpreter put in my hand, just when I came out of his doors. He gave me also a piece of a honeycomb, and a little bottle of spirits" -um on

"I thought he gave you something", said Mercy, "because he called you aside." "Yes; so he did", said the other, "But Mercy, it shall still be, as I said it should, when at first we came from home, thou shalt be a sharer in all the good that I have, because thou so willingly didst become my companion".

The Valley of Humiliation suits her gentle retiring nature.

"Then said Mercy "I think I am as well in this Valley, as I have been anywhere else in all our journey; the place methinks, suits with my spirit. I love to be in such places, where there is no rattling with coaches, nor rumbling with wheels, methinks here one may without much molestation, be thinking what he is, whence he came, what he has done, and to what the King has called him"

The dangers of the way are a greater trial, ^{to her} than they are to the more robust Christiana. When she comes to

the House Beautiful, ^s she would willingly sojourn there; the quiet happiness of her surroundings appeal to her; and girlishly she begs Christiana to stay there some time, if she is invited to do so.

Mercy "Pray, if they invite us to stay a while, let us willingly accept the proffer. I am the willinger to stay awhile here to grow better acquainted with these maids. Methinks Prudence, Piety, and Charity have very comely and sober countenances."

She is but young; and, in the Valley of the Shadow of Death, she cannot forbear sighing for the pleasant places, that they have left behind them.

Then said Mercy to Christiana "There is not such pleasant being here as at the gate, or at the Interpreter's or at the house where we lay last. [She is always full of sympathy towards those, who are in trouble; and spends her leisure time in serving the poor. NP/

"While they staid here, Mercy, as her custom was, would be making coats and garments to give to the poor."

Pamphlets.

In the seventeenth century pamphlets, serious or jocular, seem to have supplied the need, that is met at the present day by leading newspaper articles, or by verbal contributions

to Punch. Just in the same way, as the twentieth century, with all its multifarious interests, finds time to consider and to remark upon the doings of its women, so the seventeenth century, in the midst of ecclesiastical discussions, civil broils and struggles for freedom, had leisure to keep up a continual out-put of pamphlets upon the manners of contemporary women.

Some of these pamphlets are intensely serious; they were written by men, whose long experience of life, had convinced them of the utter depravity and guile of the female sex; they were intended by their authors to be warnings to their younger and weaker brethren against the soft allurements of deceitful woman. Others are much milder in tone; some kindly serious persons, with the welfare of women at their hearts, undertook to chide them for their faults, and to show them how to amend their evil ways: any woman, who is interested in the true advancement of her sex, must be ever grateful to these gentle reformers. They were careful not to hurt the feelings of those, whom they took to task; and their pamphlets often end with protestations of good will towards the whole sex. The author of *The Anatomy of a Woman's Tongue* is one of these kindly souls. He ends

his pamphlet with the following declaration:

"Thus in five parts I do dividethe tongue;
 And yet no civil woman do I wrong;
 Nor yet uncivil women can deny
 But that of them I speak but sparingly;
 For, I protest, I wish so well to all,
 That I will never dip my pen in gall."

There is a third class of pamphlets, which are frankly jocular; their authors have gathered together all the well-known jokes about women, some of which, if they did not originate in the Garden of Eden, must have been perpetrated just out side the gates; and have retailed them with such additions, as their fancy dictated, to their amused and delighted readers, who no doubt, in their turn, exploded them in the taverns and coffee houses of the day. In accordance with the custom of the age a number of these jokes are grossly indecent; but many of them are quite amusing.

Pamphlets were also written in defence of the female sex; some serious ones by women and others, evidently by men under assumed names.

The greater part of these writings, almost all of them in fact, cannot be ^{ranked as} ~~called~~ literature: they have no pretensions to style and their matter is often trifling.

They are interesting, however, because they bring the every day life of the century much nearer to us than the works of the greater authors do. They are most naive documents; the authors take the reader into their confidence in a truly delightful manner; and their candour is most refreshing. So great was the number of pamphlets written upon this subject, that it is impossible to consider all of them: we have chosen those, that appeared to us to be the most interesting.

It is with some surprise, that we turn to a pamphlet on the subject of woman's iniquity, written by the genial Dekker. "The Bachelor's Banquet, pleasantly discoursing the variable humours of Women, their quickness of wits and unsearchable deceits" was published in 1603. It is written in Dekker's usual naive style, without any bitterness. It treats of the different types of women, to whom the unwary bachelor may fall a victim. "The humour of a young wife, new married" is to be dressed in fine apparel; and this she will obtain at any cost. "And if at a feast or some other gossips's meeting, whereunto she is invited", says Dekker with a really wonderful insight into a woman's mind, "she see any of the company gaily attired for cost, or fashion, or both, and chiefly

the latter (for generally women do affect novelties), she forthwith moves a question in herself, why she also should not be in like sort attired, to have her garments cut after the new fashion as well as the rest, and answers it with a resolution, that she will make such choice that when she speaks she will be sure to speed" After much difficulty she obtains new clothes from her husband; but these do not serve her long; for they become old fashioned in their turn; more new ones must be bought, until, at length, she ruins her husband by her extravagance.

Another failing, incident to the female sex, is a desire for supremacy. Dekker treats of this fault in ^a chapter on "The humour of a woman that strives to master her husband"; ~~no~~ woman is free from this desire, he declares; it is "a general imperfection of women, be they never so honest, never so kindly fed, and have never so much wealth and ease" They try various ways to compass their desire; and the woman, who succeeds, generally does so by being "in odd contrary humours of purpose to keep her husband in continual thought and care how to please her" [Dekker ^N is most eloquent when discoursing upon "The humour of a covetous minded woman:" we can imagine that there would be something peculiarly distasteful to his easy, happy nature in the extortionate and grasping demands of a wife, who was never satisfied with what she possessed.

So much in earnest is he, when discussing the horror of possessing such a wife, that he abandons his usual courtesy; and exclaims in the margin "The devil take her"!, a sentiment probably confirmed by the pious "Amen" of those of his readers, who were thus afflicted.

"A Discourse on Marriage and Wiving and How to choose a good wife from a ¹bad" is a very mild pamphlet; had its precepts been put into practice, there would certainly have been less occasion for the reproofs and chidings of the other pamphlets. The author begins by an account of the institution of marriage; and discourses learnedly upon the excellency of the married state; then he proceeds to point out some of the mistakes, which were commonly made in his day, by young men, intent on choosing a wife.

"It is the fashion much in use in these times", he declares, "to choose wives as Chapmen sell their wares with Quantum dabitis"

When he has given sufficient advice as to the choosing of a wife, he goes on to tell how she should be treated after marriage; and we must admit that his advice is excellent. The way for a man to be happy with his wife "is to adorn her decently, not dotingly; thriftily not lasciviously: to love her seriously not ceremoniously:

1. by Alex Nicholes, published in 1615.

to ~~walk~~^{walk} before her in good example (for otherwise how canst thou require that of thy wife, that thou art not, wilt not be thyself)".

The year, which producedd this mild oration, also gave birth to a most virulent pamphlet by Joseph Swetnam, a confirmed woman hater. The title of his works is somewhat lengthy: "The arraignment of Lewd, idle, froward and inconstant women, or the vanity of them, choose you whether: With a commendation of wise virtuous and honest women". The author goes straight to the point: he makes no apologies, no delays; but plunges into the heart of his subject. He is anxious not to leave undiscovered any crime, that can be laid to the charge of the female sex; therefore he begins with a consideration of the first woman, at the moment of her creation:

"Moses describeth a woman thus: At the first beginning (saith he) a woman was made to be a helper unto man; and so they are indeed, for she helpeth to spend and consume that which man painfully getteth. Again, in a manner, she was no sooner made but straight way her mind was set upon mischief; for by her aspiring

mind and wanton will she quickly procured man's fall; and therefore ever since they are and have been a woe unto man, and follow the line of their first leader."

Having thus stated his general position Mr Swetnam descends to details. He discourses upon the many faults of women, - their deceit; for they are "dissembling in their deeds and in all their actions, subtle and dangerous for men to deal withal; their pride, their love of dress, their "ripe wits and ready tongues" - ; and ends the chapter by saying,

"If God had not made them only to be a plague to men, he would never have called them necessary evils, and what are they better?" ^{new line} [We are ashamed to confess our ignorance; but we cannot recollect the text, to which Mr Swetnam refers we wish that he had been more explicit. [In the next chapter he treats of marriage. "He that marrieth a wife matcheth himself into many troubles" he declares; and proceeds to describe the miseries, that a married man endures. He discusses quite sensibly some of the evils of the prevailing marriage system. There can be nothing "but continual strife and debate when matches are made by parents, and the dowry told and paid before the young couple have any knowledge of it; and so many

times are forced against their minds; fearing the rigor and displeasure of their parents, they often promise with their mouths that which they may refuse with their hearts". He is willing to admit that there are some good women; but they are rare exceptions:

"Yet I will not say but amongst dust there is pearl found, and in hard rocks diamonds of great value, and so amongst many women there are some good, as that gracious and glorious Queen of all womankind the Virgin Mary."

This pamphlet called forth a number of answers: we can notice only one of them: "Esther hath hang'd Hamon" or "An Answer to a lewd Pamphlet entitled The Arraignment of Women: With the arraignment of lewd, idle, froward and inconstant men, and Husbands". The writer, professedly a woman, endeavours to prove that women are superior to men; she quotes Plato on the absence of distinction of the sexes in souls; and mentions illustrious women in history; and remarks, with much wisdom, that women sometimes appear worse than men, when they are not actually so wicked; because many faults that are damning to a woman are excused in a man.

"If I do grant, that women degenerating from the true end of womanhood, prove the greatest offenders, yet in granting

that I do thereby prove that women in their creation are the most excellent creatures; for corruption, boni pessima, the best thing being corrupted proveth ¹ the worst"

"Hic Mulier" or "The Men-Woman" ² was published in 1620.

It is a tirade against the dress and free manners of the fashionable woman; and, we are inclined to think, was written by someone with decided leanings towards Puritanism. The author begins by stating, that "since the days of Adam women were never so masculine", neither in dress, speech, nor action. He addresses those, whom he wishes to reform, in quite a pugilistic manner.

"Come then, you masculine-women for you are my subject, you have made admiration an asse, and fool'd him with a deformity never before dreamed of, and have made yourselves stranger things than ever Noah's Ark unladed or Nile engendered"

He goes on to complain of

"the monstrousness of your deformity in apparel, exchanging the modest attire of the comely Hood, Cawle Coife, handsome dressed Kerchief to the cloudy Ruffianly broad-brimmed Hat and wanton Feather"

Having used these means, he tries persuasion and judicious flattery.

1 Compare with Shakespeare Sonnet 94

2 Anonymous "Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds".

"Remember that God in your first creation did not form you^{of} slime and earth like man, but of a more pure and refined metal; a substance much more worthy; you in whom are all the harmonies of life, the perfection of Symmetry, the true and curious consent of the most fairest colours and the wealthy Gardens, which fills the world with livings Plants".

The pamphlet ends by a warning to husbands and fathers, not to allow their wives and daughters to follow the new fashion of the Masculine Woman.

Whether we agree, or not, with all that the author of "Hic Mulier" says, we are forced to admit that his style is original and striking.

"Muld Sack" or "The Apology of Hic Mulier"¹ is a curious vindication of the fashionable woman. The author, who states that she is a woman, pours scorn upon the flattery of the writer of "Hic Mulier"; challenges him to bring forward the good women, whom he praises; and frankly admits all the faults laid to her charge.

"First I do answer that those imputations you do lay against me, are the chief summum bonum, the most honourable ends, the only virtues I aim at. And therefore no marvel although envied, it hath been so a principio; for what greater glory can come to the

1 Anonymous

masculine woman (as you term her) than to overrule her parents and husband".

Under the title of "Haec Vir", she blames a number of men engaged in different callings, amongst others the corrupt Judge, the lying Lawyer, and the superstitious plotting papist and bloody Jesuit; and calls upon these to reform themselves, before they find fault with the women; she bids them that they first remove those misty clouds of darkness, that now overshadow their own sight, and then boldly presume to clear the eyes of others; that they go before us in embracing of virtue and shunning of vice, and by good education enter us in the paths of modesty from which we are now estranged: and then (without doubt) we that are the weaker Vessels (now only misled by the oversight of careless parents, or indulgence of effeminate husbands are let loose to all licentiousness) shall in a short time cast off all such deformities, wherewith you now tax us."

We have already mentioned the gentleness of the author of "The Anatomy of a Woman's Tongue¹"; he displays this quality all through his work. He is most anxious that he shall not cheat the reader:

"But cast thine eye a little on the book:
Read it quite o'er and surely thou wilt say,
Thy money is well laid out, not cast away"

1 By Richard Harper ; published 1638

His advice to a new married man is well worth quoting.

"Some men will beat their wives, but that's the way
To make them obstinate and go astray;
Others no means unto their wives allow
And say that is the way to make them bow".

But our author does not agree with these stringent measures; he suggests that his young friend should "strive to overcome her with kind speeches". He describes how a woman's tongue may be a medicine, a poison, a serpent, a fire, or a thunder; and gives apposite illustrations in each case. One quotation will be sufficient. A huntsman has a shrewish wife; when she speaks loudly to him, he blows his horn; but then she speaks more loudly still. He goes to a friend and enquires what is louder than a horn; the friend replies "Thunder". The huntsman returns home;

"But all the way, he goes, he cries amain
"Women, take in your sheets, 'tis like to rain;
For since it thundered, 'tis not yet an hour,
And after thunder is usually a shower."
But when his wife did come to know of this
Her tongue did never after do amiss"

"The Women's Sharpe Revenge, performed by Mary Tattlewell and Joan Hit-him-home, spinsters, ¹ begins in rather a foolish way by calling up the ghost of Long

Meg of Westminster to defend her own sex in execrable verse. When Long Meg has retired, however, the pamphlet descends to prose; and becomes quite sensible. It states clearly, what were actually the chief evils in the treatment of the seventeenth century woman. The remarks on the education of woman are worth quoting:

"We are set only to the needle to prick our fingers; or else to the wheel to spin a fair thread for our own undoings, or perchance to some more dirty and debased drudgery. If we be taught to read, they then confine us within the compass of our Mother tongue, and that limit we are not suffered to pass, or if (which sometimes happeneth) we be brought up to music, to singing, and to dancing, it is not for any benefit that thereby by we can engross unto ourselves but for their own ends; thus if we be weak by Nature they strive to make us more weak by our Nurture; and if in degree of place low, they strive by their policy to keep us more under"

Long broodings over their wrongs may have caused these honest ladies to be a little unjust; but, nevertheless, there is much truth in what they say.

In the year 1643 was published "The Virgin's Complaint". It is one of a number of pamphlets, which deal with unchastity in women.

Others are:- Midwives' Petition 1643; City Dames Petition 1647 A Dialogue between Mistree Macquerella, Misstress Scolopendra and Mr Pimpinello 1650; The Crafty Whore 1658; The Ladies' Remonstrance 1659; A Declaration of the Maids of the City of London about 1660; The Women's Petition against Coffee, 1674; Character of a Town Miss 1675.

Henry Nevile was responsible for a number of pamphlets, which were doubtless amusing to seventeenth century readers: we miss the point of much of his work, because the names and incidents, to which he refers have been forgotten. He delighted in picturing Parliaments composed of women; and, while much of his work partook of the nature of the pamphlets last mentioned, he ~~also~~ provided much legitimate amusement.

"The Parliament of Ladies" or "Divers remarkable passages of Ladies in Spring Garden in Parliament assembled" was published in 1647. It purports to be a record of the doings of the Women's Parliament and of the acts, that were passed by it. The following record is set down under the heading "Dies Veneris. 8 Aprilis 1647"

"This day there was a commotion in the house by reason of a disorder in the City, occasioned by a rumour of Doomsday, which the people did believe was at hand The forces of the City, under the command of Moll Cut-Purse and Moll Sebran two very able members, were appointed to guard the house, who being there placed with pipes in both their mouths, with fire and smoke in a very short time had almost choked both passage and the passengers"

This much has been quoted as a specimen of Henry Nevile's wit; we shall deal briefly with his other

pamphlets, which are of a similar character.

"The Ladies a second time assembled in Parliament" has but one interesting record; and that is that a lady of the assembly objected to Beaumont and Fletcher's play, *The Scornful Lady*; and desired to have it suppressed.

"News from the New Exchange" or "The Commonwealth of Ladies"² declares the intention of the ladies of England to assert their own freedoms, and to cast off the yokes of their husbands rule.

"Now or Never" states the same determination on the part of the citizen women. The declaration is couched in dignified phraseology.

"It is not unknown to all the world, how we have been, and still, are deprived of our Liberties, living in the bonds of servitude and in the apprenticeship of slavery (not for terms of years but during life); therefore we held it not amiss to assemble ourselves together in council, whereby we may find out a way to rid ourselves and our posterity after us from these Egyptian Taskmasters (men), who by their subtle policy still insult and domineer over us, by making us their drudges, their wills being a law we are forced to obey".

Speeches are made by several members: a grave matron of

² by Henry Nevile; published 1650

³ Anonymous; published 1656

the Assembly earns the applause of the House by her brief but pithy oration.

"Of all creatures in the Creation, it is most fit that women should have the sovereignty; and I do verily believe that the Divine Powers have allotted it so; but that men do hide and keep it from us."

The next pamphlet, worthy of consideration, is an elaborate piece of fun, calculated to produce roars of laughter from the seventeenth century readers, and capable of raising a smile even in these strenuous days. The title is a small summary of the whole work: "The Married Men's Feast" or "The Banquet at Barnet being an invitation to all those married persons, who are Master over their wives, to a great dinner provided at Barnet, on Michaelmas day next"¹ Certain qualifications are necessary to gain admittance to the feast; these are set forth in a curious medley of prose and verse; and are summed up in a short conclusion.

"In sum does she go at your command, come at your call and be obedient to you in everything she is appointed to do.

If these things she perform (though you don't bast her)
Yet o'er your Wife we will conclude you Master"

The dishes, to be partaken of at the banquet, are described

¹ Anonymous; published 1671

in detail: two such descriptions will serve as examples of the sumptuous fare provided for these valiant men.

"A phoenix pie because rare men deserve rare meat, which is to be made Castle-wise, with a sprig of palm or laurel on the top of it, betokening victory.

"A dish of several sorts of Tongues, to signify that, being masters of their wives' tongues, they may freely eat upon any kind of meat without exceptions"

The author of "The Anatomy of Women, described in Two and Twenty several vices Alphabetically" ¹ seems to have roamed the Universe in search of crimes, ~~and~~ to have gathered together all those that he could find, and to have attributed them to women. Sometimes he will admit that men too are guilty of these crimes, but never to such a great extent as women. After describing the horrors of avarice, he goes on to say: "Many of both sexes of mankind have been sufficiently defamed therefore, but most especially the female, and of a certain, the inclination of women is so strongly swayed upon the coveting of riches, and greediness of wealth, that we may easily believe them to be the most avaricious creatures in the world"

Other sins that he attributes to long suffering women are envious rage, false faith, garrulity of tongue, --

1 Newly translated out of the French into English by Mr Richard Banche; published 1673

"Women have such propensity to talk that the greatest punishment they can suffer, is hindering them from babbling" - monstrous lies, and a zeal of jealousy. After this denunciation, which could scarcely be more thorough, the author bethinks himself that he has been a little too severe; and fearing, perhaps, a sharp answer to his pamphlet, he concludes with an apology.

"Do not believe my Ladies, that I designed this at leisure times for any displeasure, received from anyone in particular of your sex;; as I have composed this alphabet in amendment of the bad, so it is my design to write your Elogies, to make virtue increase in you more and more" [We cannot but be grateful to ^{new line} the author for his kind intentions.

We cannot close the discussion of these pamphlets in a more fitting way than by considering two serious and rather lengthy works by Mary Astell. She was an ardent reformer, who fully believed in the equality of the sexes; and who attempted to awaken the women of her time to a realisation of their powers. Her "Essay in Defence of the Female Sex" appeared in 1696. "The Defence of our Sex" she says in her preface "against so many and so great Wits as have so strongly attack'd it, may justly seem a task too difficult for a woman to attempt..... Through the usurpation of men, and the

Tyranny of Custom (here in England especially) there are at most but few, who are by Education, and acquired Wit, or letters, sufficiently qualified for such an undertaking" She states her belief that there is no distinction of the sexes in souls; and that women have as good natural abilities as men; but these are industriously kept uncultivated in women. Her remarks upon education are very sensible. She attacks the system of education for girls, which prevailed at her day; and praises the study of domestic accomplishments, provided that they are supplemented by more serious studies. She justly complains, that the name of learning is limited to mean a knowledge of Latin and Greek; and pleads for a more general training in other branches of study, such as English literature, philosophy and mathematics. The pamphlet ends with a consideration of the vices of men; it is evidently that Mary Astell was as much a man-hater, as Joseph Swetnam was a woman-hater; it is a pity; for she had many noble ideas; but little good can be done by anyone, who has lost faith in half of humanity. "A Serious Proposal to the Ladies", which was published in the following year, is even more interesting, because in it she attacks the chief follies of the later seventeenth century woman.

Her design was to establish a Protestant Nunnery, where women could pass their days in religious meditation, and in improving their minds, by a study of philosophy and ^{of} other more serious branches of learning. Part of the country took alarm at the proposal, thinking that it savoured of Popery; and took all measures possible to prevent it being put into practice; the rest of the nation concurred in laughing at it; and so it came to naught. The motive, that inspired the idea was certainly a good one. Mary Astell, addressing her own sex, declares that the design of the proposal is

"to improve your charms, and heighten your value, by suffering you no longer to be cheap and contemptible. Its aim is to fix that Beauty, to make it lasting and permanent, which nature with all her helps of art, cannot secure, and to place it out of the reach of sickness and old age, by transferring it from a corruptible Body to an immortal mind." She declares that ignorance is the cause of nearly all feminine failings; and blames men for refusing to extend their superior advantages of greater knowledge and greater freedom to women. Then she appeals to the women themselves; and begs them to lay aside their vanities, and worthless occupations for the pursuit of nobler and higher things.

"For shame let's abandon that old, and therefore one would think, unfashionable employment of pursuing Butterflies and Trifles! No longer drudge on in the dull beaten road of Vanity and Folly, which so many have gone before us, but dare to break the enchanted circle that custom has plac'd us in, and scorn the vulgar way of imitating all the Impertinencies of our Neighbours. Let us pride ourselves in something more excellent than the invention of a fashion, and not entertain such a degrading thought of our own worth, as to imagine that our Souls were given us only for the service of our Bodies, and that the best improvement we can make of these is to attract the eyes of men. We value them too much and ourselves too little if we place any part of our desert in their opinion, and don't think ourselves capable of nobler things than the pitiful conquest of some worthless heart"

To-day Mary Astell is neglected, almost forgotten; but these two works of hers, apart from some slight flaws in style, are well and earnestly written; and abound with commonsense; if she is sometimes unjust to men, she is but following the example, that a number of them set, by being unjust to women.