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QUESTIONS AND IMPROMPTU ANSWERS.

By MISS HARDINGE.

Question.—Is all imagination simply in sight, or is it possible to imagine things which do not really exist.

Answer.—Analyze your imagination. Can you point to any idea that is not a reflection of the past, a refraction of the present, or a prophecy of the future? No, there is not in the whole realm of nature one single original idea in the mind of man. When I say "original," I mean that there is no creative power in the mind of man—nothing but a reproductive one, and therefore as all that you can conceive of, imagine, dream, hope, or believe in, must have some shadow of past, or future, or present, so I say that imagination, however wild, is either the intuitional perception of truth, the prophecy of the future, or the broken or refracted light of the present.

Question.—(By a Lady.)—There are some ladies very desirous to hear Miss Hardinge say a word about the present standing of woman; that is, the worth of the women of the present age.

Answer.—The best evidence we can offer you of what is the work of woman in the present age is the fact that our questioner is a woman, that her question is received with respect rather than with the sneer that a few short years ago would have greeted the tender voice of woman in a public assembly. I consider that the fitting place and mission of woman is to be a helpmeet for man, and when I say this I mean not as the dependent, but as the equal of man. And in equality I signify equality of respect, equality of duty, equality of crime and virtue,

but not of physical powers. I believe that nature has drawn an impassable line of demarcation between the physical capacities of man and woman. That is, wherever the one appears to trench upon the place of the other, it is an abnormal rather than a normal growth, it is an exception rather than a rule. I believe that the place of man is strength, activity, and all that admits of life in the external, especially related to strength and activity. I believe that the place of woman is love and beauty and kindness; that she is the poetry of life, that she is the love of life, and the intuition of life, and that her duties relate chiefly to all that belong to the spirit and to the internal. I believe that the form of both is so wisely and wonderfully adapted to these two spheres that it is impossible to mistake them; in the meantime this position of both has not been recognized, and it has not been recognized from the peculiar demands which life has made upon the aggregations of humanity in societies.

The first demand of the age, in the rudimental states of human life called barbarism, was upon strength. Man must be a builder, a hunter; whatsoever occupations he followed demanded the largest amount of strength, and taxed the physical system to the utmost extent; hence strength and physical power became the world's first wealth, its first government, its first aristocracy. In this foundation of society, woman, physically the weakest, physically unable to bring to life's duties the element of wealth, which was then imperatively needed, became subservient. Her beauty, captivating the stronger man, he placed her by his side, first as the dependent, and next as the ornament, and last as the joy. Hence we find that the earliest ages of barbarism are always marked by the disgraceful institution of polygamy. We find that with the first enunciation of the pure, the just, and truly divine teachings of Jesus, woman rises instantly to her place as the companion of man. She is judged side by side with him, in the darkest and most disgraceful of all crimes. The Magdalen, kneeling at the feet of the Master, is not condemned by God, so long as there is a man that shares her crime uncondemned. She takes her place, therefore, in the Christian religion with the founder of the Christian religion. She is the first at the Cross, the first at the Tomb; she is the truest in her intuitions to recognise the divinity of the mission. She prays for Him when others scourge and mock Him. She at once marks her place by the side of the Divine Master, by the recognition that she falls chiefly through the excess of her love; and from this point her history is one of gradual progress.

Society moves slowly; it is well that it should do so. It is well that old and established forms should be girded around by conservatism lest we as rashly adopt falsehood as truth; and

hence I repeat society's slow movement is good, it ensures the gradual trial, the practice and the full development of every new truth. And so has it been with the gradual acceptance of woman's place, as no longer as the toy, or ornament, or subject merely of man, but as his helpmeet, as the companion who shall assist him, assist him by her love and her beauty, whilst he is her helpmeet, assisting her by his strength and his experience. This age in especial is the age of utilitarianism, and all things are being brought to the standard of utilitarianism. Religion is there—we are tried in the balances; and governments are there, and the disruptive principle that is agitating the masses and disintegrating them, and making individuals where we formerly had only masses. It is the best proof that utilitarianism is at work and trying all men and all institutions. And in this great trial the powers of woman are being placed in the balance, and her peculiar possibilities are all and each being tried. And what will they amount to? I will venture merely to make a prophecy. The time is coming when every woman shall be permitted to do that which her Creator has fitted her for, and that shall be accepted as her place and mission. The time is at hand when it shall be recognised, that the parable of the ten talents was meant for woman as well as for man, and that whatsoever God has fitted woman to do, he demands back of her with usury; and woe be to him, husband, father, or governor, who stands between the Creator and the creature. And the fact that that time is at hand is recognized first by the fact that our angels, our heroines, call them by either name, and you will call them fitly, have dared to enter the camp, have dared to stand by the side of the dying soldier, and to minister to him in scenes hitherto deemed the most unfit and inappropriate for the presence of women.

The fact that woman shall take this place is proved by the signs of the times, which permit her now, even in despite of the sneer and the scoff and the bitter rebuke—in despite even of the anathema, in some instances, of Churchmen—permit her to speak, when her God has endowed her with a power to move mankind by the tone of her voice, to proclaim the thought that her Maker has given her in the speech which He has given her also to clothe that thought withal. That is another sign of the times. And yet another sign of the times is in the recognized fact that God has better fitted woman for the duties of nurse and physician, and ministering by the side of the sick bed, than even the strong and wise men; for He has given her clear sight, clairvoyance—that mystic power that penetrates with the spiritual eye where the natural cannot search. The fact that women are the best and most numerous clairvoyants of the day, is a hint that there is a demand gradually making itself into a supply for

women as physicians; I do believe that as priest, physician, teacher, nurse—as minister in every department that demands sympathy, intuition, clear sight, patience and endurance, woman will take her place. I do believe that in this age of utilitarianism, man can no longer keep woman back from that which her God has intended her to do. In the meantime I would counsel any who may expect from me some statement of the mode in which we propose to assume what we may conceive to be our rights—I would urge upon those who listen to me to beware how they ask for those rights by legislation, by any external forms that rob woman of the grace, the beauty, the gentle holiness of her nature. Let her be woman still—let her perceive that the doors are opening on every side—that it needs but her own firm step, armed with her womanly purity and all of womanly graces that she can carry with her—let her recognise this, and man's hand will not be raised to drive her back. On the contrary, it is because woman has too often failed to perceive those very points of attraction that make her woman, and sought to exchange her nature for that of man, that she has been repelled with scorn and dislike from many spheres which she could have gracefully occupied, and still more gracefully with all the attributes of woman about her. I have no fear but that our Creator and our creature-brother man, will, in this day of utilitarianism, accord to us all that we can ask, all that we can do, if we will be but faithful to ourselves. And when I say this, it is with the belief that we are not wholly so. I will ask woman to commence where her Divine Teacher commences, by first equalising herself and her sex in right and wrong.

Woman! determine that whatsoever is wrong in woman is wrong in man. Woman! visit upon man every crime that you brand upon the brow of woman. It is for you to do it, and not for man. So long as society, especially female society, extenuates the faults of men, they know them not themselves—so long as man is taught by the voice of society—especially of the voice dearest to him—only to regard his crimes as mere gallantries, but woman's crime as unpardonable, who is to be man's teacher? Woman! that lot has fallen to you. If you ask for your rights, first commence by considering your sisters' wrongs. Woman! consider again that you are the founders of the next generation in the education of your daughters. If you require right yourselves, if you lament that no wise mother has educated you to take any other place in society than that of a mere speculator in the matrimonial market—if you lament that you have had no place made for you, but the waiting dressed and adorned until some man should give you a place in society, oh! correct this lamentable and degrading position with your daughters. I ask

that every living creature shall be a worker—that every single hand shall be raised to help on the chariot of creation. I ask that every man, woman, and child shall have a place and a mission, and work to do. God has assigned it to us when He gave us powers, energies, talents, and intellect. There is not one of us but who should fill some place advantageously. If the gifts of fortune are so showered upon us that there is no impetus to labour, think of the poor, think of the helpless woman surrounded by piteous little children crying for bread, half clothed, and yet compelled to leave them huddled together in danger and hunger, and filth, and misery, and ignorance, whilst she goes forth to work. Oh, woman, there, there is your place, as teacher to the poor—as a missionary angel in the haunts of darkness. Lament not that the world is full of wrong, so long as you keep your hand back from helping it on to right. Oh, woman, as physician, as physician to those who cannot help themselves—whilst I acknowledge that there is no profession in the known world, no records of any profession so marked with benevolence as that of medicine—whilst from the beginning of time to the present day the warmest hearts and the kindest and the most faithful workers for man's good have been ever found amongst the ranks of the medical profession;—I would ask, if woman can be physician, if she can minister to the sick, if she can alleviate suffering, may not a profession so adorned, so graced by benevolence, so stamped with the record of the noblest and the kindest deeds, be shared most gracefully by the favoured daughters of fortune? May not they minister tenderly, while the rude and savage hands of those ill-paid, brutal, and ignorant crowd, unhappy paupers out of life, instead of ministering them back into life.

Oh, there are spheres for every one of us—the princess on the throne, the humblest girl who labours in a factory. No woman should ever look upon her fair young girl, without recollecting that God has planted her in the garden of life for some other purpose than merely to wait to be culled by the hand of man. Can any ability, any power, any good work, or any intellectual position that woman has—can these render her less fit to be the companion of man? Deem it not; let her be the helpmeet for him. Be assured that when her intellect elevates her into his companion instead of his listener, though your club-houses may be deserted, your homes will be more full. I have said too much perhaps on such a question, but I have said enough to shew my questioner that there is yet a vast field for study; and I for one most earnestly thank her, and humbly entreat of her to pursue the subject at other times and seasons to a yet wider issue than this one short address can present her with.

Question.—If we admit that man is a responsible being, to whom is he responsible? and does the responsibility extend to his thoughts and feelings as well as to his actions?

Answer.—If man were not surrounded by the bond of laws, he is not a responsible being. Just so long as he finds himself hindered on every side by law, he is assured that he is responsible to the lawgiver. No matter in what direction you turn, a law hinders you. You are not responsible to yourself; you may suffer pain if you choose, you may prefer pleasure if you desire it; but just so certainly as you find that you are compelled to endure pain, or shall reap pleasure, you find that you have no choice in the matter. The fact of the law proves your responsibility. I do not propose to define for you a theological God to whom you shall be responsible, as you are taught by sect, or creed, or dogma, country or clime. I do believe in God, the great Spirit, the mighty Lawgiver, the universal Father; and though I know that His ways are kind—though I recognize that all works together for good—though I bow down before His exceeding beneficence—though I believe He loves this flower and has made it beautiful, that in his beneficence He has made it beautiful, not only for its own sake, but for ours—though I do know He has given it food, light, air, sunbeam and dew, and cared for it as much as he cares for us,—though even this little leaf proves to me God's goodness, I find that God's justice is equal to his love—for if we violate one single point of law, behold we pay the penalty. In whatsoever direction, it matters not, there it is; and it is to Him, the Lawgiver, the framer of the law, that we are responsible through ourselves. We are the evidence of our responsibility; and mark! we carry forward, we Spiritualists, that responsibility beyond the grave. It is well for the Materialist to say, "Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die;" but we Spiritualists know we cannot die, and if there is any truth in the fact that the soul's immortality is proved by the returning spirit, it is a truth that that responsibility follows us into the hereafter in yet more terrible shape, and although I believe God's love is there, his justice is still with us.

Are we responsible in thoughts and feelings as well as actions? I have said we do not originate our thoughts. I have said, and pleaded, and argued, to prove that no idea within us is a creation of our own. How then can we be responsible for thoughts and feelings? No more than we are responsible for organisms, diseases, or disabilities. But we do not let those alone. We do not suffer disease to consume us, nor deformities to remain unchecked, nor disabilities to prey upon us: we resort to means to modify and change and alter them. And precisely

after the same fashion shall we deal with our thoughts and our feelings. If they tend to that which we are instructed to know is wrong—call it by what sophistry you may—I say wrong—when it impinges on the rights of another—if we find that our thoughts are thitherwards, are there no possibilities of calling in the aid of a moral as well as of a physical physician? Are there no medicaments for soul as well as for body? I say yes—knowledge, teaching, struggle, strife, hope, faith, aspiration, admiration of the beautiful, study of the good, schooling of mind and discipline of body, are all just as possible for the mind as they are for the physical system. I assert therefore, that we are not only responsible for our deeds, but primarily for our thoughts and feelings, for our deeds are the children of our thoughts and feelings. What we do is the expression of our thought. Supposing that we crush back the thought, and do something in place of that which we had thought to do, why we have created or developed a new thought, and whatsoever we do, I repeat, is first created within our brain—it has a spiritual origin—and therefore it is to the spirit that I charge you to apply all your medicaments and all your legislation. Bring to bear upon it your highest knowledge. If you are the creature of circumstances you are also a creature unto yourself. If you are a creature of motives, why endeavour by wisdom, schooling and instruction, to implant a fresh study of motives, where the original ones are wrong and pernicious. By these means we shall not only be responsible to our Creator, but shall also recognise our responsibility to ourselves. For there is a dual action everywhere, and as God has entrusted us with life, He has given us the responsibility to ourselves. As every movement, every thought, and every feeling, therefore, is charged with responsibility, oh, Spiritualists, how great is yours! You who can see the light and pursue the issues of this life beyond the grave—can recognise not only the results of thoughts, feelings and actions here, but can now trace them into the great hereafter. I may not dwell on this theme, but as the mantle of the prophet has fallen upon me, look to it, for the world expects from modern Spiritualism, that it shall prove another Elisha to mankind.

SOMETHING CURIOUS ABOUT SUICIDES.—The legal journal, *Le Droit*, in reporting the suicide of a gentleman in the Rue de Provence, without any known reason, states that his immediate predecessor in the apartment and the occupier before him, both laid violent hands upon themselves, and upon the strength of these curious facts broaches the theory that suicide is often attributable to mysterious local influences. In support of the doctrine it is said that Napoleon I. ordered the destruction of a sentry-box in which several soldiers had successively destroyed themselves.