

SEVENTH DAY

HERE in the stern the faint, wistful cry of the gulls comes to me. I too, like them, fly above deep waters, and follow uncertainly strange things from unknown lands.

I wish I could really feel unconsciously, spontaneously. I feel so tired to-day; so physically good. I want to weep and wash the feet of some idol with tears. I want to repent, to kneel for sleepless nights on chill marble floors. I want to do penance, to strike across my shoulders where he touched them, to strike with thongs . . . that is the secret, to have my shoulders touched again.

Yet forbidden things taken for their

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own sake mean bestiality, regret about them, weakness.

“Yes, I like you to kiss me,” I granted.

“But everything, everything!” he stormed; “it all must be reciprocal.”

Reciprocal! A possible thing to the innocent woman. It was like the hook proposing reciprocal sentiments to the fish.

I feel a mental pariah. Shut out from the accustomed ways of thinking, pushed to the edge of chaos.

I hate the world, I hate humanity. I feel no kindred with them, only a sullen revolt against sharing with them the limitations of our humanity.

We know there is Beauty, maddening complete Beauty of matter and sense; but some film of distortion is drawn over our eyes, and we can neither hear, nor know, nor see as we would. It is true that now

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we do indeed see through a glass darkly.
Oh God, oh love, oh my love!

What a fool I am! That wind, and the roar day after day of the waves, has got on my nerves. There are tears in my eyes. Still, it is an interesting experience to know that I have enough of the usual humanity to cry; but it removes some of the sentiment when I know it is only a matter of the never-ceasing clang of the sea.

Sentiment is a matter of the adjustment of some nervous excitement to some physical condition. What humanity wants is sentiment undiluted by the nerves and undictated to by the body. That would be aping the excitement of the earthquakes and the wantonness of inconsequent winds.

I am irritated by my own seriousness over the thing, all this fear of reading the things I read before, this amused defiance before the propriety of those old maids: I

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am breaking myself on the reef that in olden days drowned women in convents. It is a remnant of the old Methodist training. Yet the thing itself was less to me than his first look that made my eyes fall before his. He subdued me then. I could not control my eyes, or the tremor of my blood, if his hand would touch mine; but this feeling now—that hideous hour—that hideous hour——

I could trust him, of course. I would trust my soul in his hands, to place it in those of God—only, Nature has failed, life has failed; we do not get from Love what Love promised. I do not understand; I will not understand.

I do not think I ever want to see him again—other men perhaps, but not him. I had thought Love was so wonderful, and all it means is that! Yet I loved him.

It would remind me like a blow, like a smear across my face, if I saw him, of

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all that life fails to give: we loved each other, and it failed. It was so hideously blank, mean, beside what I had expected of the mystery of life.

I am afraid of him. He claims me as a right, and I belong to myself.

The Afternoon.—Our lives are only the unconscious products of what we have sympathetically read or heard or seen. I have found myself insisting brutally on theories that I discover I unrealisingly read years ago, that my eyes saw but hardly understood. The other unknown, rapacious self grasped at it all like some caged creature eager for food, for stimulant; and I, helpless under its will, live out these cloud theories.

This inside thing is the Fate that makes our life. Our body is only some ambiguous figure of our dreams, a carriage for it, a go-cart, a prison van. But only the

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rich can make it appear fit to be in the beauty of the world, have the right to keep it alive. Every one else has to prove that right. We have to redeem our creation by genius, by success, by tearing the gift of the world out of the hands of Fate. That compensates for being alive, makes us creators ourselves.

And women—we were not given brains to create, we can never know the triumph of genius, we are only given bodies to people the earth, and gain in the fleshly creation some of the rapture of the gods.

I have no doubt a mother, when the new glory is still on her, feels herself near the Unknown Source of life, and that she is part of the powers of the universe. It probably grows early dim, this ecstasy of giving birth. The woman of many children does not show on her face the illumination that marks men who have brought mental life to the world.

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And it is right; the first is often the loathsome, always the unnecessary result of an animal hunger; the latter the fruit of bitter work of revolt, or defiance of the greatest forces we know. It is the passion of Prometheus: a child is only the affirmation of an appetite. Yet it sanctifies women, constitutes their apology to the world.

And at least it is definite; serves an end, however temporary, of mental dedication; does, however feebly, make them one with Nature.

I stand aside and wonder whether they are wiser than I would be in their place—for I have no choice, no sane woman would have an illegitimate child—or whether their sacrifice is the final laugh of the gods at the most pitiful of the things they have made.

For all the torturing analyses, the flowered idealism, the superior sham, what dif-

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ference was there between his feeling for me and that of those frankly vermivorous things who breed with as little calculation as a toad?

When all had culminated there was only one thing he asked of me. As for me, I was frankly fond of his kisses, but all the climax was on my part a matter of calculated curiosity and the hallucination of the first time he touched me. But when I knew the reality—was that all that women are to men, that I am to him?—nothing more, nothing more? I am only human, he is only human. I am blinded, assailed by a storm of futilities. Am I always to shiver alone against the eternities, simply a speck of the womb of the cosmos? Have I not eyes to see with, lips to speak? Oh, my love, is that all you want? Is that all Love is?