# British Family Life, 1780–1914

## Wives and Mothers

Edited by
Susan B. Egenolf

ROUTLEDGE

# BRITISH FAMILY LIFE, 1780–1914

# CONTENTS OF THE EDITION

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General Editor
Claudia Nelson

Volume 3
Wives and Mothers

*Edited by*
Susan B. Egenolf

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# INTRODUCTION

In Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1801), Lady Delacour outlines for Belinda the course of her ladyship's dissipation, beginning with her having chosen a husband from her suitors, very like a 'novice' in a shop, who 'after examining, and doubting and tossing over half the goods in the shop, it's ten to one, when it begins to get late, the young lady, in a hurry, pitches upon the very ugliest and worst thing that she has seen'.[1] From her description of marriage as a commodity, Lady Delacour moves on to a discussion of her three children and her trials of motherhood: the 'first was a boy; he was born dead', and Lord Delacour's family blames Lady Delacour for his death because she 'would not be kept a prisoner half the year' during her pregnancy. The second child, a 'poor diminutive, sickly thing' was nursed by Lady Delacour because

> [i]t was the fashion at this time for fine mothers to suckle their own children – so much the worse for the poor brats. Fine nurses never made fine children. There was a prodigious rout made about the matter; a vast deal of sentiment and sympathy, and compliments and inquiries ... I became heartily sick of the business; and at the end of about three months my poor child was sick too –I don't much like to think about it – it died. If I had put it out to nurse, I should have been thought by my friends an unnatural mother – but I should have saved its life'. (p. 42)

The trauma of the second child's death persuades Lady Delacour that she will not 'have the barbarity to nurse' another child herself. When her third child is born, she sends 'it off immediately to the country, to a stout healthy, broad-faced nurse, under whose care it grew and flourished' (p. 42). Lady Delacour hardly recognizes the 'chubby' three-year-old who returns to her as her 'own child'; deciding to use the same reasoning for child rearing as for nursing, Lady Delacour hires a governess, who 'plague[s]' her 'with her airs' and ends up the mistress of Lord Delacour (pp. 42–3). The governess is sent packing and the child goes 'into better hands' at a 'celebrated academy for young ladies' (p. 43). Although Edgeworth's *Belinda* is a novel of courtship and coming of age for the young Miss Belinda Portman, it is also a novel of domestic reclamation in which Belinda and the events of the plot conspire to overthrow Lady Delacour's early declaration, 'I could not be happy at *home*' (p. 41). Lady Delacour's daughter

Helena is restored to her, Lord Delacour quits gambling and drinking and works to win her affection, and she resigns her position of slave to fashionable life to become mother and wife.[2] Lady Declacour's history illuminates the important debates of the time regarding the mother's role in the nourishing of a child's body and mind. The character also clearly indicates that decisions about her comportment as wife and mother were less personal than public, subject to 'a vast deal of sentiment and sympathy, and compliments and inquiries'. She acknowledges that sending the second child to a wet nurse might have saved the child's life, but she would have been deemed an 'unnatural mother'. Edgeworth, herself an author of children's tales, proposed, along with her father, Richard Lovell Edgeworth, a system of childhood education and more general advice to parents on the values to be imparted to children, and she obviously knew well the vast body of literature offering advice on marriage and child rearing.

Spurred by more general Enlightenment debates about the formation of character and society and more specific questions about equality initiated by the American and French Revolutions, the traditional role of the wife seemed poised for revision at the dawn of the long nineteenth century. Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) opened with a letter to M. Talleyrand-Périgord, who had penned a 1791 report on public education submitted to the French Constituent Assembly, urging him to reconsider his plan to include women:

> Contending for the rights of woman, my main argument is built on the simple principle, that if she be not prepared by education to become the companion of man, she will stop the progress of knowledge and virtue; for truth must be common to all, or it will be inefficacious with respect to its influence on general practice.[3]

Although Wollstonecraft observes that 'women cannot, by force, be confined to domestic concerns', she also argues that women 'whose minds are not enlarged by cultivation, or the natural selfishness of sensibility, expanded by reflection, are very unfit to manage a family'.[4] Women trained only to please husbands and not to be able to employ reason in conversation would be unable to cultivate friendship and respect in their marriage.[5] While details of Wollstonecraft's personal life, including an illegitimate child born while living with the unscrupulous Gilbert Imlay and having intimate relations with William Godwin well before marriage, lead to wild misrepresentations of her argument, the advances she imagines for women are to occur within the auspices of traditional marriage and motherhood.

The readings in this volume trace a sea change in the possibilities that women could envision for themselves within or outside of marriage and motherhood; however, because of the view of marriage's central role in the stability of the nation, those changes were to come slowly and to be viewed with scepti-

cism. Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall write in *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780–1850*, 'Marriage was the economic and social building block for the middle class; it was the basis of a new family unit. On marriage men assumed economic and jural responsibility for their wives and the expected brood of children. With marriage, women assumed their full adult status'.[6] Sally Mitchell assessed the ideal of the middle-class woman's role in a similar manner: 'The pure woman's life was supposed to be entirely centered on the home. She preserved the higher moral values, guarded her husband's conscience, guided her children's training, and helped regenerate society through her daily display of Christianity in action'.[7] Highly invested in an institution that could 'regenerate society', the *1851 Census of Great Britain: General Reports* asserted the importance of marriage to the strength and health of the nation:

> Marriage is therefore generally the origin of the elementary community of which larger communities in various degrees of subordination, and ultimately the nation, are constituted; and on the conjugal state of the population its existence, increase and diffusion, as well as manners, character, happiness, and freedom, intimately depend.[8]

Although much of the scholarship concerning marriage in the nineteenth century focuses upon the middle class, we include in this volume several primary works that address the roles of wife and mother among the working class. A treatise on 'Marriage' from *Tracts on Practical Subjects Addressed to the Working Classes* (1861) grounds its discussion of marriage in biblical readings. For instance, the author writes, 'God has given you dominion over the woman, and has declared that "the head of the woman is the man"',[9] but he/she also cautions against misuse of the husband's 'superior strength of mind and body':

> Can there be a sight more degrading than that of a man's strong arm, which should protect and shield, lifted up to assault his wife? It is an unmanly thing to attack a woman, to take advantage of her weakness, and to exercise your brutal violence upon her, without danger of getting any harm yourself.

The author generally focuses upon the practical aspects of marriage,

> 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is,'[10] a thousand little duties will suggest themselves to the mind, such as prudence, economy, neatness, cleanliness. The comfort of married life depends, in great measure, upon trifles. Little acts of thoughtfulness, kindness, and attention spring from a loving heart, and are of vast importance in making a cheerful home. The little gift, the work of your own hands, – the preparation of a favourite dish, – the tidy room and cheerful fire got ready for the husband's return, – such little attentions do much to promote love and good-will. It is not the value of the gift that is prized, but the love of the giver'.

For the author, the duty to the family, the wife's role in promoting familial tranquillity is to the glory of God. Although the author makes clear that wives should revere their husbands and act as helpmates, he/she also emphasizes,

> Men should remember that though God has given the husband authority over his wife, yet they are 'heirs together of the grace of life.' This last is the hinge on which all the rest turns. They, man and woman, are equally born anew in Christ's kingdom; upon both equally is shed the gift of the Holy Ghost; to both equally is eternal life held forth.

In a 1787 sermon directed to a broader audience, Joseph Fawcett highlights the advantages of married life on earth: 'Whatever is delightful in human life, is to be enjoyed in a greater perfection in the married, than in the single condition. There is something in it that doubles satisfactions, because others partake of them; and lightens afflictions, because others share them'. Such ideas of the shared burdens and joys of marriage take on a decidedly different cast in readings from about a century later. In the introduction to *Eight Papers and Discussions upon the Disabilities of Mothers as Workers* (1910), the author, addressing the Fabian Women's Group, comments,

> we postulated that a woman desires to possess an income, at her own individual disposal, as a man does. Being Socialists, we hold that every adult should gain his or her personal share of the country's wealth by working for it, in so far as he or she is physically and mentally able to do so.

The Fabian women here advocate a progressive sharing between men and women that moves beyond the bounds of the family structure. From the same publication, Mrs S. K. Ratcliffe read a paper on the question 'Are Young Children Benefited or Injured by their Mother doing Regular Work apart from her Care of Them?', presenting another interesting perspective on the sharing that might take place in marriage childcare responsibilities:

> Beginning by fixing all final responsibility for upbringing on both parents, she pointed out nevertheless that an excellent mother of children was not necessarily, was perhaps rarely, a good nurse, companion, or teacher; that for these functions training was necessary; and that the best nurses, child companions, and teachers were those with a natural aptitude, choosing this as their occupation.

Mrs Ratcliffe encompasses two fairly radical suggestions in this part of her lecture, the first being that 'both parents' bear 'all final responsibility for upbringing' of children, and the second, harkening back to Lady Delacour's summary that she put her third child 'into better hands', relieves mothers of the principal duty of childcare and actually sanctions communal childcare as a profession. The Fabian women here radically re-envision marriage and motherhood where the mother and wife might seriously pursue a profession beyond tending to the family.

A slightly earlier article from the *Women's Penny Paper*, also included in this volume, ponders 'The Proper Age for Women to Marry' (1890), and urges that 'any sensible woman' not allow 'her daughter of eighteen to go from the schoolroom to the altar', warning of a possibly tragic result from early marriage:

> Look at the girl in a very few years' time with three or four children around her. Body and mind are debilitated; her studies have all been stopped, her accomplishments put an untimely end to, and instead of at twenty-five or thirty being in the prime of her powers, she is wasted and half-worn out.

While the *Penny Paper* mentions instances of women marrying in their mid to late teens, the reality is that many nineteenth-century women married far later than we might expect: working-class women 'married between the ages of twenty-three and twenty-six, though one in twelve married before the age of twenty'[11] and '[f]or the country as a whole, the mean age at first marriage was 25 for women and 27 or 28 for men'; 'both men and women of the middle class were often older than 30'.[12] Davidoff and Hall's cases studies of women in the long nineteenth century reveal that women were bearing children for about 13 to 27 years, depending on their age at marriage, with birth intervals of 15 to 39 months, often shorter if the mother was not nursing and longer towards the later part of the child-birthing years, possibly connected to decreases in fertility of either partner.[13] The work of mothering could indeed occupy the better part of a woman's life. However, the *Penny Paper* author asserts, 'The progress of civilisation has made a total change in the demands upon woman. Her duties are not now limited to the family, but her sympathy, help and counsel are being called for in wider spheres'.

Such possibilities for women were clearly a danger to nineteenth-century society. Claudia Nelson and Ann Sumner Holmes, in their introduction to *Maternal Instincts: Visions of Motherhood and Sexuality, 1875–1925*, assert that '[l]ate-Victorian fears regarding prostitution, homosexuality, and feminism highlighted the sense of security that sheltering (and sheltered) mothers could provide. Conversely, if a mother stepped outside the boundaries of purity and family – except, or sometimes especially, if she sought thereby to reform the public realm – she appeared threatening'.[14] One bridge for women between spheres that translated the skillsets needed for complex negotiations of household management to a larger arena was that of social work or benevolent action. According to Patricia Comitini in her study of women writers and philanthropy from 1790 to 1810, 'it is women who heed the call to the "vocation" of philanthropy and charity, and consequently this social practice, and the benevolent and altruistic qualities associated with it, becomes "feminized" at this point in history'.[15] Comitini terms this work 'vocational philanthropy', 'not because benevolence and sympathetic understanding were natural to women, but because the ideological association of women with these qualities increasingly provided agency

for middling-class women to enter a field of public discourse about poverty and the state of English society'.[16] To the women in our volumes practising vocational philanthropy, we have applied, as mentioned in the General Introduction, Carroll Smith-Rosenberg's term 'public mothers'.[17]

Public mothers are to be found throughout the volumes in their roles as missionaries or members of charitable subcommittees visiting the poor; Eleanor Rathbone epitomizes the public mother in her ardent devotion to social causes. Her *Report on the Condition of Widows* (1913) excerpted here demonstrates both the tremendous dedication of the public mothers, and the potential dangers as they are forced to make decisions about aid based upon the qualifications of the mothering widows. In the categorizing 'the character of the out-relief mothers', the Parish of Liverpool sets what Rathbone terms an 'unfortunate pre-eminence' by dividing the widows into four classes of mother:

> Class I are women really above the average, capable and trust-worthy, able to give their children an excellent training, to plan for their future well-being, and to sacrifice a present gain to a future good.
>
> Class II are women of lower morale; good in intention but less able to carry out their intentions, to look forward or to cope with their responsibilities. Often these are the women whose health has failed, and whose force of character has not given them the power to rise above it.
>
> Class III included the slovenly and the slipshod women of weak intentions, and often of weak health, not able to make the most of their resources; the comfort of their homes falls even below their means.
>
> Class IV are the really bad mothers, people guilty of wilful neglect, sometimes drunkards or people of immoral character. No woman has been put into this class of whom it was not fairly evident that she was unfit to have charge of the children.

Although Rathbone understands this to be a dangerous precedent, she also admits that funds to mothers in Class IV are unlikely to benefit the children. In regard to the poor widows generally, she concludes, 'It cannot be expected that a body of women living under such conditions should be conspicuously successful as housewives, or that their children will grow up as capable of taking their place in the world, as children bred under happier and more normal circumstances.' Rathbone also seems aware, however, that this taxonomy of motherhood might be applicable to other classes, acknowledging that more affluent mothers 'have servants and governesses to make good [their] deficiencies' in the very difficult work of mothering.

## Guidance and Ideals

The nine selections reproduced in 'Guidance and Ideals' might be grouped into five categories. The sermons and moral lessons include Fawcett's Sermon VI, 'Ephesians v. 33. Let Every one of you in Particular so Love his Wife, even as himself; and the Wife see that she Reverence her Husband', from *An Humble*

*Attempt to Form a System of Conjugal Morality: Being the Substance of Six Discourses Addressed to Young Persons of Both Sexes* (1787), William Duff's *Letters on the Intellectual and Moral Character of Women. On the Station for which they are Destined: On the Characters they are Qualified to Sustain: And on the Duties they are Required to Discharge, Both in Private and Social Life* (1807), and 'Marriage' from *Tracts on Practical Subjects Addressed to the Working Classes* (1861). As can be seen from the sections quoted above from the 'Marriage' tract, these works offer guidance based on biblical interpretations of marriage and of the proper roles of husband and wife. In every instance, the ideal of the submissive woman is emphasized, but this is balanced somewhat by instructions to the husband to love his wife and to employ his superior position as Christ might view with approval.

Two of the works in this section deal with loss and the offer of comfort. The first text addresses the loss of a child, a not infrequent experience in the nineteenth century. In *To a Christian Parent on the Death of an Infant* (*c*. 1823–38), the greatest comfort the author can offer the grieving parents is to believe in the glory of the afterlife:

> It is a high privilege for parents to see a child happy on earth, and pressing forwards, as a youthful pilgrim, to the heavenly city; but they can then only rejoice with trembling, for many a pilgrim has halted on his journey, or been waylaid by dangers, or seduced by temptation from the right path: but when a child has really entered the celestial city, when the pilgrimage is passed, when the victory is won, and the crown obtained,[18] then may the parents well rejoice with joy unspeakable.

The second text, *Comforting Words for Widows, and others who Mourn* (1905) by M. G., consists of hundreds of quotations from clergymen and authors such as James Russell Lowell, Mary Jane Linskill and Thomas Carlyle. Many of the quotations offer the succour of biblical wisdom, but some simply offer empathetic passages about loss and grief:

> This then was the thing that human beings called loneliness: one where two had been; a thick darkness where had been a great, tender light; a coldness where had been a fervid, tremulous, palpitating warmth of love and life.
>
> *M. Linskill.*[19]

Two of selections in this section provide practical advice. In the *Family Friend* (*c*. 1852) periodical, an advertisement for bound copies of the magazine describe it as 'a sort of domestic textbook; assisting wives, husbands, mothers, fathers, and children, in every duty of life'. The *Family Friend* published articles, riddles, science projects and home receipts, including the best method for washing lace, a method of taking a profile in black, advice for curing bee stings and a receipt for writing ink. Madame Cecelia's 'Mothers' Meetings' from *Girls' Clubs & Mothers' Meetings* (1911), a work of public mothering, details how one might start

Mothers' Meetings for working-class mothers in one's own village. The Mothers' Meetings afforded poor women a chance to gather, to make useful garments from subsidized cloth, to occasionally hear a magic lantern lecture and to have a break from their daily chores.

Thomas Timpson's 'Mrs. John Clayton', from *British Female Biography: Being Select Memoirs of Pious Ladies in Various Ranks of Public and Private Life* (1846) demonstrates guidance by example. Timpson produced biographies of mostly selfless women who devoted their work to God. The final piece in this section was likely directed at a fairly learned audience. Cecil Chapman's *Marriage and Divorce: Some Needed Reforms in Church and State. Report of the Royal Commission* (1911) provides a detailed and progressive examination of the history of marriage and divorce, ultimately advocating for divorce to be an option more readily available to all classes.

## Experiencing Family Life

The seven texts in this section represent families in action, medical and health practices, and good works designed to promote the family. The selected letters of Eliza Fenwick to Mary Hays from *The Fate of the Fenwicks* (1927), penned in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, illustrate the difficulties of a mother separated from her husband and attempting to sustain herself and her children. Fenwick ultimately travelled across the Atlantic, always seeking the opportunity that would bring her family security. Agnes Giberne's *Miss Devereux, Spinster: A Novel of Development* (1891) presents a fictionalized account of a spinster pressed into the service of mothering when her brother dies and leaves his two children to her care. Although such an extended family situation was fairly common (a spinster might also join a widowed brother to help with his children), Giberne's Miss Devereux proves unable to successfully nurture her niece and nephew, who become competent adults almost in spite of her misguided efforts. E. Nesbit's 'The Criminal' (1907) is an interesting tableau of crime and punishment between a young child and his mother, detailing events from both perspectives.

'Early Management of Infants,' from *The Young Mother; or Affectionate Advice to a Married Daughter* (*c*. 1840s) by Mrs [Esther] Copley and two chapters from *A System of Midwifery* (1841) by Dr Edward Rigby both offer an assessment of health practices and advice for methods of treating particular problems, such as miscarriage. Copley's work, as the title indicates, is cast as an intimate advice book and includes suggestions for treating the spirit as well as the body. Dr Rigby's text is directed at professionals and is augmented by research from British and Continental doctors working in obstetrics. The Reverend Dr Glasse's entry on 'dibbling wheat' is one of the many reports of good works performed by the Society for Bettering the Condition and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor (1802). His

sketch is paired here with Rathbone's more extensive *Report on the Condition of Widows under the Poor Law in Liverpool* (1913), discussed at length above.

## Threats and Anxieties

We include ten selections underscoring the vulnerability of the position of wives and mothers in the long nineteenth century. Henerietta Battier gives voice to the grief of infant death in two poems mourning her lost children, closing 'An Elegy on the Author's Son' with this plaintive request:

> And O! great God of little children spare,
> To a fond mother's agonizing prayer,
> The two dear little ones, beside whose bed
> My prayers are offer'd, and my tears are shed;
> Spare them, O! God.

Dr Edward William Hope's Liverpool Assistant Medical Officer of Health Visiting Day books (1883–6), transcribed from his unpublished manuscript, effectively details the threats of starvation and disease among the poor of Liverpool. Mary Leadbeater's journal written during the 1798 Irish Rebellion, also produced from manuscript, ably demonstrates the collision of public and private spheres as her domestic space is invaded by soldiers fighting on both sides of the rebellion. Leadbeater and her family experience the murder of neighbours and the chaos of battle as everyday occurrences during the rebellion; her narrative excerpted here ends with her painful lament written when her young daughter Jane dies from a household accident.

Two of the texts featured in this section represent transcripts, likely embellished, from court cases: *Trial for a Breach of Promise of Marriage. Miss Elizabeth Chapman, against William Shaw, Esq.* (1790) details Miss Chapman's suit against William Shaw, who apparently promised to marry her and then left the region and returned married to another woman. Breach of Promise cases were most often brought by the working classes, and the reporting of them became a melodramatic entertainment. The suits were almost exclusively filed by women and were overwhelmingly successful. '*In re* Besant' from *The Law Reports Division I: Chancery* (1879) details a painful child custody case in which Mr Besant claimed,

> since her separation from her husband, Mrs. *Besant* has taken upon herself not merely to ignore religion, not merely to believe in no religion, but to publish and avow that unbelief, and to become the publisher of pamphlets written by her, and to deliver lectures composed by herself, stating her disbelief in religion altogether, and avowing that she has no belief in the existence of a Providence or a God.

Lord Eldon ruled in favour of Mr Besant, commenting that he found some of the opinions professed by Mrs Besant to be 'perfectly shocking'.

Two of works in this section illustrate threats from within. Poor Mary from 'Fine Feathers' (1881) by Mrs George Gladstone is done in by her own vanity:

> Mary had one great fault, and that was love of dress ... When she left her country home and became Richard Sharp's wife, she could dress as she liked, and come out in her true character. London sights were very attractive to her, but she wanted so much finery to make what she deemed a proper appearance, that even in the early weeks of married life Richard had to reprove his wife for spending his wages thoughtlessly, and buying things that were unfitted to her station.

Mary deceives her husband and indulges her desire for finery by purchasing items on credit. Her husband enlists for India when he discovers her betrayal, and Mary must return to her humble roots, take God as her saviour and perform good works in the community before she is redeemed. In Jacob Jones's Gothic drama *The Stepmother* (1829), the title character is undone by her own greed and her wish to put forward her own son over her husband and his rightful heir.

The final texts of this section might all be seen as modern threats to the traditional roles of wife and mother. 'The Proper Age for Women to Marry' from the *Women's Penny Paper* and the Fabian women's *Summary of Eight Papers and Discussions upon the Disabilities of Mothers as Workers* have been discussed above. Bessie Drysdale's 'Specially for Women,' from the *Malthusian* (1908) takes on the issue of population control; the threat to the nation and to global security is reproduction. By addressing her essay specifically towards women, she ironically asks them to be better public mothers by mothering less.

Notes

1. M. Edgeworth, *Belinda* (1801), ed. K. J. Kirkpatrick (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 36. Additional quotations from *Belinda* (based on the 1802 edition) are cited here parenthetically.
2. The success of Lady Delacour's reformation is a point of some debate; in the novel's final tableau, Lady Delacour arranges all of the characters to demonstrate their familial ties; however, she removes herself from the domestic pairing of Helena and Lord Delacour in order to take centre stage and address the audience.
3. M. Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), ed. C. H. Poston (New York and London, 1988), p. 4.
4. Ibid., pp. 5, 66–7.
5. Ibid., pp. 29–30.
6. L. Davidoff and C. Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780–1850* (1987; London and New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 322.
7. S. Mitchell, *Daily Life in Victorian England* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2009), p. 266.

8. As quoted in J. Worsnop, 'A Reevaluation of "The Problem of Surplus Women" in 19th-Century England', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 13:1 (1990), p. 22.
9. See 1 Corinthians 11:3.
10. See 2 Corinthians 3:17, 'Now the Lord is the Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty'.
11. See J. Perkin, *Victorian Women* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), p. 81.
12. See Mitchell, *Daily Life in Victorian England*, pp. 146–7.
13. See Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, pp. 335–8.
14. C. Nelson and A. Sumner Holmes, 'Introduction', to *Maternal Instincts: Visions of Motherhood and Sexuality, 1875–1925* (Basingstoke and London: MacMillan, 1997), p. 5.
15. P. Comitini, *Vocational Philanthropy and British Women's Writing, 1790–1810* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2005), p. 1.
16. Ibid.
17. C. Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Knopf, 1985), p. 263.
18. The reference is to John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress from this World to that which is to Come* (London, Printed for Nathaniel Ponder, 1678). Bunyan's influential religious allegory traces Christian's journey from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City, or from our world to heaven.
19. Mary Jane Linskill (1840–91), from her novel *Between the Heather and the Northern Sea* (London: Richard Bentley & Son, 1884).

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*Ali Baba; or, The Forty Thieves Destroyed by Morgiana, a Slave. On which is Founded the New Grand Operatical Performance* (Hull: J. Ferraby, [*c*. 1790]).

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# FAWCETT, 'SERMON VI. EPHESIANS V. 33'

Joseph Fawcett, 'Sermon VI. Ephesians v. 33. Let Every One of You in Particular So Love his Wife, Even as Himself; and the Wife See that she Reverence her Husband', in *An Humble Attempt to Form a System of Conjugal Morality: Being the Substance of Six Discourses Addressed to Young Persons of Both Sexes* (Manchester, 1787), pp. 101–17.

Joseph Fawcett (*c.* 1758–1804) was a Presbyterian minister and poet. He pursued his religious training at the Daventry Theological Academy, beginning in 1774; in 1780 Fawcett 'became morning preacher at Marsh Street Presbyterian Chapel, Walthamstow ... where he soon developed both his preaching abilities and unitarian opinions'.[1] Fawcett married Charlotte French, daughter of his former teacher, in 1782, and in 1785 he began presenting the Sunday evening lecture at the Old Jewry meeting-house in London. Alan Ruston writes: 'It was here that Fawcett became one of the most popular and fashionable dissenting preachers of his day, who "so much distinguished himself by his eloquence"' (*The Times*). He is said to have attracted '"the largest and most genteel London audience that ever assembled in a dissenting place of worship"' (*Monthly Repository*, 1817, 90)'.[2] Fawcett's lectures attracted a wide and varied group of auditors, including actors like Sarah Siddons and the Kembles, as well as the poet William Wordsworth. After ten years, Fawcett retired from his lectures and moved to the country, leasing a farm near Aldenham, Hertfordshire, where he could turn his attention fully to farming and poetry. During the war with France, Fawcett penned several anti-war poems including his well-known poem *The Art of War* (1795).

Fawcett published with the radical publisher Joseph Johnson and was acquainted with members of the Johnson circle, notably William Godwin. It is perhaps no accident then that some of the passages included in the sermon selected here seem to have influenced Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). As detailed in the notes below, Fawcett argues that women should expand their minds to become better wives and mothers; he also suggests that mutual respect and friendship are important foundations for marriage: 'A woman of improved understanding, and real sense, is more likely to submit to her condition, whatever it may be, than the uneducated and half learned' and 'The accomplished wife makes it [her] business to serve, and her

pleasure to oblige her husband; she is humble and modest from reason and conviction; submissive from choice, and obedient from inclination'. You may recall that a major tenet of the *Vindication* is that women should act from reason and conviction, not because they are told that something is the right thing to do. However, several of Fawcett's other suggestions for wives would have been more likely to have been immediately discarded by Wollstonecraft. He writes that '[i]t were too much to say, that to be in the right is a male quality; but to feel one's self in the right, or rather to shew that feeling, is not delicately female. Man was born to govern, to guard, and to protect; woman to obey, to please, and to reward'. Fawcett also opines that woman gains power through obedience: 'She never struggles or contradicts, but uniformly accomplishes her designs by submission'.

Fawcett published a number of his sermons and the one featured below comes from a collection entitled *An Humble Attempt to Form a System of Conjugal Morality*. He concludes a somewhat strange and personal preface to this work with his reason for publishing: 'But surely the corruption and lewdness of the times will justify the preacher in sending these into the world, which, however mean in themselves, may be productive of some good, and be an useful lesson to young persons, never to court, where they have not serious thoughts of love; nor to marry, where there is not a rational probability of being happy'.[3]

Notes

1. See A. Ruston, 'Fawcett, Joseph (*c.* 1758–1804)', *ODNB*.
2. Ibid.
3. Fawcett, *An Humble Attempt to Form a System of Conjugal Morality*, preface, p. 13 (not reproduced here).

# Joseph Fawcett, 'Sermon VI. Ephesians v. 33. Let Every One of You in Particular So Love his Wife, Even as himself; and the Wife See that she Reverence her Husband', in *An Humble Attempt to Form a System of Conjugal Morality: Being the Substance of Six Discourses Addressed to Young Persons of Both Sexes* (Manchester, 1787), pp. 101–17.

The word wife is the most agreeable and delightful name in nature; if it were not so in itself, all the wiser part of mankind, from the beginning of the world to this day, has consented to an error; if it were not so, man would not here be commanded to love her as himself. Herein it is, that divinity, by a most kind and welcome force obliges us to that, to which humanity does passionately prompt us. Herein it is, that we are by a gentle tie bound to that as Christians, to which we were all before desirous to be bound as men. I cannot help thinking, however, that the restraints of law, which have been laid on marriage, greatly discourage virtuous love. It is said, the marriage act[1] is justified by the example of foreign nations; but so also is arbitrary power, and there are few acts which in their nature and spirit tend more to despotism than the marriage act. But omitting to consider it in a political light, I shall view it for a moment, as it effects the morals of the sexes. Let us suppose the case of two young and virtuous persons powerfully struck with each others agreeable qualities, and deeply in love. The consequence of being obliged to postpone a legal union may tend to promote an improper intercourse, (since an intercourse there must be from the influence of love, as well as from the dictates of prudence) by which the maid may be forsaken, and the lover corrupted. Yet I will add that alterations in an act, in which the domestic happiness of every family in the kingdom is interested, should not take place but after the coolest deliberation, and the testimony of long and decisive experience. Villains will avail themselves of a freedom from restraint, to allure the incautious female into matrimony, merely for the sake of her fortune; and surely some precaution must be taken by human laws to prevent

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that cruel species of robbery. To rob a father of his child, and then to forsake or injure that child, none but a father can feel the agonizing pain that rises on the reflection. Her husband receives her, for the most part, from the hands of those, under whose wings she had till that time been safe and happy; from those, whose goodness he promised to supply, and whose indulgence he has sworn to imitate. He takes her from the bosom of parental tenderness, to feed and cherish her in his own, and therefore should *so love her even as himself,*[2] and be more careful to preserve his character and reputation, because her's depends upon it.

Women are generally respected and esteemed in the world according to the merit and character of their husbands, which may be one reason why they are enjoined to reverence them, *and the wife see that she reverence her husband*. How shocking then to set out with fraud, and to proceed with deceit, in this solemn engagement? Let your words be bonds, your oaths oracles, your love sincere, and your thoughts immaculate, in the advances you make towards a young lady of the strictest virtue, and have something that may please her mind in its purest innocence, as well as celebrate her person in its highest beauty. This would instruct a woman to be a good wife, all the while it is a wooing her to be a bride. Imagination and reason would go hand in hand in a generous amour. I must confess, I ever thought it the most valuable recommendation of a wife, to be capable of becoming a conversable companion to her husband.[3] I do not consider the ladies as only beautiful figures placed in the world by way of ornament, or as delightful flowers formed merely to variegate and enrich the colouring of the universe;[4] nor harbor the degrading idea of their being only intended for the procreation and necessary continuation of the human species; but consider them as beings with whom we may form the tenderest of all connexions, which affords the truest pleasures and the fairest prospects that humanity knows; the pleasures which are enjoyed at home, and the prospects which include a family: nor did I ever conceive that the qualifications of a cook-maid, a laundress, or a housekeeper, were the most desirable accomplishments in a partner for life. A woman of improved understanding, and real sense, is more likely to submit to her condition, whatever it may be, than the uneducated and half learned; and such a one will ever be willing to superintend economy, when it becomes her duty, and to take an active part in household management, when the happiness of him she loves, and of herself, depends upon her personal interference. The education of children in the early periods, particularly of daughters, naturally belongs to the mother. Her inclination to improve them, seconded by her ability to take the proper methods, must be attended with the most valuable effects. But little nourishment of mind can be imbibed from a mother, whose ideas hardly ever wandered beyond the limits either of a kitchen or a dressing room.

If the ladies would sacrifice to the graces, in their conjugal demeanour, as sincerely as they do at their toilets, and labour incessantly and with delight, to

enlarge the sphere of their knowledge, and aggrandize their minds with truth, justice, humanity, and genuine religion,[5] and with enlarged views of the Deity, as he is manifested in the natural and moral world, their intellectual acquisitions would enable them to entertain their husbands by every agreeable information, and make them daily not only more fond of them, but infinitely more satisfied with themselves; nor could they enough applaud their good fortune in having their lives varied every hour, and their hearts more glad from every circumstance which they meet with. For mutual love gives an importance to the most indifferent things, and a merit to actions the most insignificant. Whatever is delightful in human life, is to be enjoyed in a greater perfection in the married, than in the single condition. There is something in it that doubles satisfactions, because others partake of them; and lightens afflictions, because others share them. Nature has given all the little arts of soothing and blandishment to the female, that she may chear and animate her companion, in a constant and assiduous application to the making a provision for his family, and the education of their common children. By a sort of second process, her nature is, as it were, more sublimed, and though she is not formed with strength of body to govern, yet she is furnished with attractions to control the heart of man. What is refined in study, and useful in the milder modes of life, suits the more tender health, and those softer graces, that give the highest luster to the female sex.

Whatever I see a knot of misses busy at their needles, I consider myself as in the school of Virtue, and look upon their occupations with much satisfaction, because I regard them as providing a security against the most dangerous ensnarers of the soul, by enabling themselves to exclude idleness from their solitary moments, and with idleness, her attendant train of passions, fancies, chimeras, fears, sorrows and desires. Let the men unenvied shine in public; it is the women must make their homes delightful.

Public life (though some females have shone in it as stars of the first magnitude) is not certainly the proper walk of the sex. Far other excellencies than those, which grace the statesman, the politician, or the hero, are generally to be expected from them. To lecture with authority, to argue with violence, to dispute with obstinacy, are qualifications purely masculine. It were too much to say, that to be in the right is a male quality; but to feel one's self in the right, or rather to shew that feeling, is not delicately female. Man was born to govern, to guard, and to protect; woman to obey, to please, and to reward. Man fits at the helm, and having the management and direction of affairs, in whatever station, business or profession he is engaged, must expect to meet with various misfortunes and disappointments in his passage through the world; and therefore, as most able, is appointed to perform the journey. The care of providing for his household, of acquiring what is necessary and convenient, falls to the lot of the industrious husband. How then is the good and virtuous wife, the partner of his

joys and sorrows, to behave to him in those crosses and vexations he meets with in this great scene of vexation, the world? Is she to reproach his melancholy, to inflame his passion, to imbitter his disquietude? Or is she, on the other hand, to endeavour to calm his sorrows, and sooth his affliction; to consider the wounds of adversity which pain him, as received in her service; the disquietude, which he feels, as endured for her sake? Is she not to give way to the petulency or anger which appears in him, to esteem it not as the natural inmate of his breast, but as an importunate intruding stranger brought thither by misfortunes and disappointments? The greater, therefore, his sorrows are, the greater should be her care to remove them. Her tenderness should increase in proportion to his disquietude; her forbearance to his warmth; her complacency, to his uneasiness. Her smiles are to make amends for the frowns of the world, and her love and kindness to compensate for its hatred and ingratitude.

Man governs by law, woman by persuasion. Her's is a sovereignty founded on complaisance and address, and, in domestic life at least, has been felt and acknowledged in all ages. Mark how she aspires and rises to universal dominion and empire. She never struggles or contradicts, but uniformly accomplishes her designs by submission. Her indulgence of her husband secures her own; and she possesses the blessed art of giving way, by which she is enabled the more effectually to keep her ground. I have often remarked, how women of capacity and elegance have possessed the hearts of their husbands, in a degree which is not common; I mean, where those husbands had any worth or discernment. You will easily imagine, that I suppose the women in question too wise and too excellent to affect superiority; or not to give to their partners all the credit and consequence possible on every occasion. If they place their glory in despotic rule instead of kind attraction, and chuse rather to tyrannize over dastardly slaves under the form of husbands, than to influence those husbands as tender friends; what can we say, but that we pity their husbands much, but them the more. For the idea of a little paultry power assumed without title, and exercised without discretion, to give up the worthiest triumph of their sex, how mean and how miserable! *Tell it not in Gath; publish it not in the streets of Ascalon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice; lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph*.[6] Alluding to such Solomon observes, *it is better to dwell in a corner of the house top, than with a brawling woman in a wide house*.[7] Depend upon it, such dispositions are always disgusting. Were she that indulges them blooming as the spring, or beautiful as the day, no charms of understanding or of person could compensate in her the want of soft compliance and meek submission. Heaven made her insinuating, but not in order to be cross: it made her feeble, but not to be imperious: it gave her beauty, but not to disfigure it with anger; and imparted to her a sweet voice, but not to be a scold. The female mind as well as form is naturally soft and delicate, more susceptible of pain and pleasure than the mind of man. Her form can

boast of finer harmony, though of less strength. In like manner, the sentiments of the softer sex abound in a peculiar tenderness, delicacy and vivacity. If they are not solid, they are refined; if they are not just and serious, they are natural and cheerful, more gay and lively than men. Nature had given them beauty of external form, superior to that of the men. The power which this gives them over our hearts, they well know, and they need no instructor how to exercise it. But if we suffer what should be only a soft alteration, to grow into an absolute dominion, and those qualities which were intended to enhance our pleasure and polish our manners, to assume an arbitrary power over our reason, and to control our mental faculties, we do not make use of those powers which heaven gives us; and if evil follows, whether in a moral or in a natural sense, we are the authors of it.

In all concessions a man should consider whether the present he makes, flows from his own love, or the importunity of his beloved: if from the latter, he is her slave; (if from the former, her friend) and he is to see the hour in which he is to be reproached by her for this very complaisance to her. There is something so moving in the very image of weeping beauty, that it were to be wished those eloquent drops were no more lavished on trifles, or employed as servants to their waywardness; but reserved for useful occasions in life, to adorn generous pity, true penitence, or real sorrow.

I would humbly propose to the ladies, for their own ease and happiness, to be good humoured, to be mild to their domestics; nay, to be complaisant even to their husbands; because good humour, mildness and complaisance are good for their faces. For whenever they say or do a good humoured thing, they add a new beauty to their countenance; and by giving some attention to the affairs of their families, and now and then living regularly, keep off somewhat longer than otherwise the wrinkles of age.

It is very unfortunate, that within that circle where all the virtues of temper find an ample range, too many think themselves at liberty to be rude and quarrelsome, and frequently exercise the worst turns of their temper, where they ought to exert the best. I see one advantage to be reaped from the company of those who live in the hourly repetition of sharp answers, eager upbraidings, and distracting reproaches; and that is, to form ourselves for the world by patience at home; and I would have, if possible, a wise man be contented with his lot, even with a shrew; for though he cannot make her better, he may make himself better by her means; he may be beholden to her, that he bears so well the temper of others; but he must be grieved when he sees her fretting and bleeding inwardly from trivial motives; when he beholds the face of an angel agitated and discomposed by the heart of a fury.

I cannot consider, without a secret indignation, that all those affections of the mind, which should be consecrated to their children, husbands, and parents, in all the domestic innocent endearments of life, are vilely prostituted and

thrown away. Was the understanding, that divine part in our composition, given for such an use? Is it thus that we improve the greatest talent human nature is endowed with? What would a superior being think, were he shewn this intellectual faculty in a female fury, and the same time told that it was by this she was distinguished from brutes, and allied to angels; to whom man looks up as a being of the sweetest, loveliest, and most celestial order, whose beautiful smile communicates the happiness she feels to all around her, and like a smooth stream, reflects every object in its just proportion, and fairest colours; while the angry countenance, like troubled water, renders back the images of things distorted and broken, and communicates to all that disordered motion which arises solely from its own agitation?

This species of good humour, which is the result of understanding, virtue, and gratitude, has a double claim to female attention, and ought to be uniform in its appearance, and consistent in its manners. It should not, like an April day, lower and shine almost in the same moment; nor like the flaming heats of July, should the brightness of the meridian sun foretel the approaching thunder. There is a yet higher and stronger motive for avoiding rage, jealousy, or any other ungentle passion, which deforms the fairest face, as much as it degrades the mind. If she presumes to call herself a Christian, shall the disciple of a suffering Saviour dare to resent, with furious outrage the real or imaginary injuries she may receive? or can she kneel before the throne of mercy, and supplicate the God of peace and good will to man, for pardon and protection, while her heart is agitated with a spirit of malice and revenge towards a fellow creature, frail as her wretched self? Let us suppose what, I think, the worst of all situations, an amiable young woman possessing the tenderest affection for her husband, while he, from the natural depravity and inconstancy of his nature, has withdrawn his love from her, and perhaps bestowed it on some unworthy object, to whom he devotes his time and fortune. In such a state of wretchedness, what line shall our neglected wife pursue? The first step that I would recommend to her, is that of entering into a serious and impartial examination of her own conduct. If she cannot discover any fault in her manners, that might have given offence, or created disgust, let her steadily pursue the same behavior she has hitherto practiced; for if that be totally free from error, it is impossible that any alteration can give additional efficacy to it. For to resent or to retaliate, neither her duty nor her religion will permit; nor is there any instance to be met with, where female violence has ever conquered male obstinacy; or where dissipation or coquetry, though they have alarmed the pride, ever reclaimed the alienated affections of a husband. I can, by no means, advise her to turn a fashionable wife, with respect to the conjugal bed. The modishness of the crime does not diminish it. I would recommend the contrary behaviour, which deserves all her heart and application in the attempt. And she has this for her encouragement, that her endeavours will be always pleasing,

and she will find the affections of her husband rising towards her in proportion to her endeavours to please him.

Solomon, in his description of a virtuous woman, has furnished us with the finest idea that ever was given, *she openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness*.[8] And surely there exists not a being, under the form of a husband, who could reject such an address with scorn or violence. Recollection may furnish to my fair readers many instances, where patient sufferings have been rewarded with returning love. But never yet was love recalled by lamentations or upbraidings. The first may sometimes create pity, but oftener begets contempt; and the latter never did, not can produce any passion, but instant rage, or cool determined hate. It is wonderful to observe, how easily man gets into a habit of being the least agreeable, where he is obliged to be most so; because he has a woman of merit who is obliged to receive him kindly; who pretends to no succour, and hopes for no relief, but from him; and yet he never reflects, that to come home only to sleep off an intemperance, a punishment, cannot but give anguish. Their hours together are either painful or insipid; the minutes she has to herself in his absence are not sufficient to give vent at her eyes to the grief and torment of his last conversation. The suspected wife, if she suffers wrongfully in her husband's opinion of her, and is upbraided falsely, is often put in mind of an ill thing, that she would not otherwise perhaps have thought of; which fills her imagination with such an unlucky idea as in time grows familiar, executes desire, and loses all the shame and horror which might at first attend it; and sometimes makes her resolve to give him reasons for his suspicions, and to enjoy the pleasures of the crime, since she must undergo the ignominy. Such probably were the considerations that directed the wise man in his advice to husbands, *be not jealous over the wife of thy bosom, and teach her not an evil lesson against thyself*.[9]

It will require much pains, but they are pleasing ones, to keep the ever turning wheel of sublunary bliss, from rolling down the rugged precipice, where jealousy, disgust and grief mark the horrid road. But I have not engaged to prevent inconstancy, I have only undertaken to describe it. Whatever seeming uneasinesses little absences may give, they are some of the best preservatives of love and desire. But love thrives best in places the least frequented, where it is seldomest exposed to the wanton gaze of the wandering eye, or the cruel hand of the rude or fly invader. Virtuous love, like true devotion, flies from noise, seeks retreat, and delights to indulge itself unobserved by all but the object of its veneration. They who have chosen each other out of the whole species, with a design to each other's mutual comfort and entertainment; who have a rising family to introduce into the world, consider the mutual interest in which they are engaged, with all the motives which ought to incite their tenderness and compassion towards those, who have their dependence upon them, and cast a look upon each other the most tender and affectionate you ever beheld. The man

can say, if I am unacceptable to all the world besides, there is one whom I sincerely love, that will receive me with joy and transport, and think herself obliged to double her kindness and caresses of me, from the gloom with which she sees me overcast. What returns of love are due to her, whose tenderness thus relieves her husband's cares, whose affection softens his distress, and whose good humour and complacency lighten and subdue his afflictions. The duties which are powerfully called forth by this endearing relation, are of that tender kind which inspire goodness and humanity. He who beholds a woman whom he loves, shewing a sweet solicitude to please him by every decent, gentle, unaffected attraction, is soothed, is subdued, and yields himself her willing captive. There is an influence, there is an empire, which belongs to the fair sex, and which I wish them ever to possess: I mean that which has the heart for its object, and is secured by meekness and modesty, by soft attraction and virtuous love. The accomplished wife makes it [her] business to serve, and her pleasure to oblige her husband; she is humble and modest from reason and conviction; submissive from choice, and obedient from inclination. It is the wife's interest as well as duty, to be in subjection to her husband; because she, who most easily complies with his will, is for the most part indulged in her own; and she hath the most frequent opportunities to obey. And that she may never feel herself under the dominion of a master, let her husband impose on her no other commands but such as may render her subjection the more agreeable, and his authority the more lasting. Let the end proposed in all their disputes be truth, and no victory; and the desire of both to convince, and not to conquer; *and let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband*.[10]

FINIS.

# DUFF, *LETTERS ON THE INTELLECTUAL AND MORAL CHARACTER OF WOMEN*

William Duff, *Letters on the Intellectual and Moral Character of Women. On the Station for which they are Destined: On the Characters they are Qualified to Sustain: and on the Duties they are Required to Discharge, Both in Private and Social Life* (Aberdeen, 1807), letter XLVIII, pp. 272–9; letter XLIX, pp. 280–2.

William Duff (1732–1815)[1] was a Church of Scotland minister for several parishes in Aberdeenshire, Scotland, and the father of four sons and seven daughters. Duff wrote across many genres, and his works include critical essays, a sentimental novel and a women's conduct book. The critical essays, in particular, are 'grounded in an empirical philosophical framework and a theory of the mind quite different from Romantic conceptions'.[2] In result his texts are the product of the Scottish dissenting academies and thinkers, and they are preoccupied with issues of sensibility, taste and reason. Yet, they also contain pre-Romantic considerations of imagination and genius. Most critics have focused on his most prominent works of literary criticism, *An Essay on Original Genius; and its Various Modes of Exertion in Philosophy and the Fine Arts, Particularly in Poetry* (1767) and *Critical Observations on the Writings of the Most Celebrated Original Geniuses in Poetry, Being a Sequel to the Essay on Original Genius* (1770), both of which were moderately well received by critics.

The advertisement for *Letters, on the Intellectual and Moral Character of Women* announces that Duff began composing this work as early as the 1780s. In the time between the conception and publication of *Letters*, Duff would live through the death of his mother, brother, wife and three young children. These losses perhaps inspired Duff to extend his moralistic works to the consideration of female character, though female conduct books were also a popular genre for Scottish ministers at the time. A non-extant final publication titled *Letters to his Daughters; The Last Address of a Clergyman in the Decline of Life* (1814) existed, and perhaps these two later works were indirectly addressed to his four surviving daughters. *Letters* is dedicated to the Duchess of Gordon, addressed to the 'Ladies of Great Britain', and fits the genre of the eighteenth and nineteenth-century female conduct book. Directed mainly at daughters, this genre sought

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to outline a code for female sensibility and behaviour during a time of social flux for Great Britain. Duff's letters are a distinctive address to the '"encroaching spirit" and "licentious principles" of Mary Wollstonecraft, but also called for improvements in female education and reforms in male behavior'.[3] The below excerpt contains letters XLVIII and XLIX, which denounce the arguments of Wollstonecraft yet carefully navigate the implications of female submission within a political climate that rejects the absolute rule of kings.

Notes

1. The headnote for William Duff and the endnotes in the piece that follows were written by Elizabeth Grumbach.
2. See M. Rooney, 'William Duff', in Frans De Bruyn (ed.), *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, *Volume 356: Eighteenth-Century British Literary Scholars and Critics* (Ottowa, CA: Ottowa University Press, 2012), online at <http://galenet.galegroup.com.lib-ezproxy.tamu.edu:2048/servlet/GLD/hits?r=d&origSearch=true&o=DataType&n=10&l=d&c=1&locID=txshracd2898&secondary=false&u=DLB&t=KW&s=4&NA=william+duff> [accessed 3 Aug 2012].
3. See M. C. Moran, 'Duff, William (1732–1815)', *ODNB*.

## William Duff, *Letters on the Intellectual and Moral Character of Women. On the Station for which they are Destined: On the Characters they are Qualified to Sustain: and on the Duties they are Required to Discharge, Both in Private and Social Life* (Aberdeen, 1807), letter XLVIII, pp. 272–9; letter XLIX, pp. 280–2.

### LETTER XLVIII.

I Observed, Ladies, that some of you are married, and therefore are under the protection of your husbands. As you are supposed to stand in the relation, and to sustain the character of wives, I hope you will readily allow, that there are certain duties of a peculiar kind incumbent upon you towards your husbands, resulting from the relation you bear to them, which it highly concerns you to discharge.

I acknowledged, in a former Letter, that the general character you sustain, as the friends and companions of man, supposes an equality, which appears at first view somewhat inconsistent with the superiority claimed by our sex, and often exercised with too much rigour over yours. It cannot be denied, that where there is a great disparity in the outward condition, and in the inward temper, capacity, and dispositions of the mind, betwixt persons of different sexes, there can be no foundation for a perfect friendship. The question therefore is, wherein consists that equality, which, it must be confessed, is necessary to the character of the friends and companions of our sex, and how is it compatible with the plea of our prerogative? Without entering too deeply into this delicate subject, I would observe, that the equality necessary to constitute that friendship betwixt the sexes, for which they were mutually designed, implies an equal participation of the rights and privileges of rational beings,[1] destined for an immortal existence; and such a happy conformity of the qualities of the mind, and of the dispositions and affections of the heart, as are favourable to the friendship of two individuals of different sexes; at the same time that it admits of that subordination of the gentler sex to their male companions, which results from their different consti-

tutions both mental and corporeal, and particularly from the last being destined and qualified to be the guardians and protectors of their female friends.

I am not ignorant that there are some ladies of uncommon spirit, who after they are married, imagine, or at least act as if they did imagine that all domestic subordination upon their part was then at an end, and that they are entirely their own mistresses. Being now released from the fetters of parental dominion, and *emancipating themselves from the restraints of the matrimonial yoke*,[2] they resolve to enjoy their liberty, and to '*call no man their master upon earth*.'[3]

Though I acknowledge, Ladies, I am very fond of vivacity and spirit in your sex, and consider these ingredients as an admirable seasoning in the matrimonial feast; yet I am inclined to think, that too great a proportion of these ingredients sometimes spoils the entertainment. Give me leave likewise to remind you, that there are many of our sex, who though sound Whigs in their political principles, retain a little tincture of Jacobitism[4] in their principles of domestic government; and how much soever they detest those exploded doctrines of passive obedience and nonresistance[5] in the government of the state, they are not for excluding them altogether in the government of their households.

It is a question, which to political writers hath been often a subject of discussion, what form of government is upon the whole best suited to the nature and state of man. And some of them have given the preference to the republican form, some to a limited, and some to an absolute monarchy.[6] I shall not enquire which of these forms is attended with the greatest advantages in the government of a state; but it seems to be the opinion of most of our sex, that in the government of a family, a monarchy, I will not suppose that they mean an absolute one, which for my own part I do not much like, is the best; for a house divided against itself, they think, cannot stand, any more than a kingdom;[7] and if the ruling power must be vested in one, they trust that most wives are able to declare from experience, that it cannot be placed in better hands, than in those of their own husbands.

I am perfectly aware, that the sovereignty of which many of our sex are so tenacious, will be disputed by those high spirited dames, who have long exercised, I will not say usurped, an uncontroulable dominion over their *patient* and *acquiescing* husbands. I will indeed readily allow, that these ladies may have one plea in their favour, that of *prescription*; and that since the æra of their matrimonial union, there may not have been a single *interruption* of the authority they claim. But as I am afraid that some individuals of our sex may be obstinate and refractory enough to dispute their title to a sovereignty, which however *long* it has been *exercised*, and however *patiently* it hath been *submitted to*, they think of too much importance to be determined by the single plea of *possession*; I think it incumbent upon me in candour, to declare, unwilling as I should be to strip the ladies of any of their *rightful* privileges, that in my opinion, the *remonstrants* have

reason to expect, that their *opponents* should adduce some other evidence, if any they have, in support of their claim.

As I shall for my own part decline encountering female reasoning or eloquence upon this point, I shall content myself with referring my fair antagonists to an authority which I am afraid must be allowed to be against them, and which I am sure they are too good Christians to controvert. The authority I have in my eye, is that of the apostle Paul, who indeed seems to maintain the prerogatives of the husbands, with as much earnestness as most of his sex; and who, unfortunately for the plea of female sovereignty, enjoins wives to be subject to their husbands, (forgive, Ladies, the harshness of the expression,) *in every thing*.[8] 'What, Sir,' cries the spirited Scintilla,[9] 'do you pretend to inculcate the antiquated doctrine of passive obedience upon our sex, and to found that doctrine upon scripture? Let me remind you, Sir, that the apostle Paul, upon whose injunction you found your opinion, spoke upon occasions without book; for he acknowledges, he sometimes delivers his own private opinion,[10] without the influence of inspiration; and it is perfectly clear to me, he could not have been inspired, when he maintained a doctrine so subversive of the natural equality of the two sexes. Had he in general allowed a divided dominion, I should not have objected to it; but I am determined not to resign one punctilio of our privileges, to a sex, which if it is allowed to make the smallest encroachments upon our rights, would observe no bounds, but would transform us into their slaves. – The Salique law,[11] which in France excludes women from the throne, thank God, does not obtain in Britain; and let me remind you, Sir, as a proof of our capacity to govern kingdoms as well as families, that England never made a greater figure at home or abroad, than during the reign of the illustrious Queen Elizabeth. If a woman is fit to govern a nation, I hope you will allow that she must be fit to govern her own husband; and if he happen to be the weaker vessel, as you must own is often the case, it is evidently for his advantage that he be under the management of his wife.' 'I am far, Scintilla, from doubting the capacity of your sex. It is only their right to govern, that I am disposed to question. – But as you are so violent a stickler, for what you conceive, in some cases at least, to be the rights of your sex, I have only to wish, my lively friend, that you may rule over the *good man your domestic subject*, with a little more lenity and moderation, than the great queen above-mentioned sometimes did over her national subjects at large.' But seriously speaking, I declare for my own part, that I detest arbitrary and tyrannic rule on either side, in private, if possible, more than I do in public life; and as the greatest punishment that can be inflicted on a man, who exercises such rule over a meek and quiet spirit at home, I heartily wish that he may in a second marriage be matched with a termagant, who shall be the plague of his life. If any of you, my friends, have the misfortune to be connected with surly husbands, void of good nature, for it is to be apprehended there are several of

the sex thus unfortunate; I am sorry to say, that I know no remedy but meekness and patience. You may, indeed, reason and remonstrate with your husbands; but I seriously advise you, not to provoke them by contumacy or contempt. Your retorted invectives and reproaches may rankle, perhaps enrage your haughty lords, but will neither reclaim them, nor mitigate your sufferings. 'Music,' says the Poet, 'has power to charm the savage heart;'[12] and if any thing can melt the heart of an imperious husband, who has treated an amiable wife with barbarity and outrage, it must be the plaintive distress of the fair sufferer, weeping in silence over those injuries, which the penitent contrition of the man who has inflicted them, can alone redress. He must be a savage, indeed, who can be unaffected by such a sight. It was by a spectacle of this kind, that Milton has, with great judgment and knowledge of the human heart, represented our first progenitors as totally overcome, even though the woman was in the transgression.

> Soon his heart relented,
> Towards her, his life so late, and sole delight,
> Now at his feet submissive in distress.[13]

If such is often the power of suffering beauty, though guilty, what must be its effect when innocent? You have no reason therefore, Ladies, to repine at the want of that dominion, shall I say? which is an object of ambition to many of your sex, or of that influence over their husbands, which may reasonably become an object of desire to them all, though this object is not commonly nor creditably to be attained by violence.

> 'Far other arts are yours, far other arms.'[14]

Tears, expostulations and intreaties, my lovely friends, are your proper weapons. By these, you may make an impression on, I will not call it the savage, but the susceptible and yielding heart of man; which for the most part you may, as many of you do, govern at pleasure. To a dominion acquired and established by influence and persuasion, I have no objection. Its effects are like the silent and salutary dews of heaven upon the tender plant, which spreads its leaves and raises its head under their benign and genial influence. Your governing in this manner will, I firmly believe, often be for your husbands' emolument, and it certainly will be for your own credit.

## LETTER XLIX.

I AM afraid that many of you, Ladies, will think you have had enough, perhaps more than enough, of the unpalatable doctrine advanced in the preceding Letter. Give me leave, therefore, to assure you, that it is a doctrine which though scriptural, I am not fond of maintaining, against a sex I so much honour and respect;