—*of men*—notice the omission and enquire of him, and this is the answer they get:

'*Oh, yes he is weeping* as he holds the woman he loves, his bedfellow, in both arms. He is begging her not to abandon him: *he wants what he cannot have.*'

The chorus then burst into a lament which is interrupted by the appearance of Alcestis and her husband outside the house. The following scene is an extreme example of that combination of pathos and irony from which Euripides never shrinks. The lamentation of Alcestis, expressed in lyrics of the purest quality, is answered at regular intervals by Admetus in iambic couplets where style and thought alike are cruelly commonplace.

Then Alcestis who has been standing, supported by her women, sinks to the ground and with one last cry *to her children* thrice repeated seems to faint away. Admetus in the name *of the children* begs her not to forsake him 'this is worse *for me* than any death: on you we all depend—to live or die.' Alcestis makes her final effort, and for the first time addresses her husband by name, but in the pathetic speech that follows, her last words are for her children, and it is plain that she is terribly afraid that Admetus will marry again and inflict a step-mother upon them. Admetus himself hesi-

tates to give the promise, and it is one of the chorus who answers the dying wife.

With Alcestis disappears the pathos of the play. The rest is ironical, a realistic criticism of the resurrection story and hardly concerns us. But the scene between Pheres and Admetus where the old father—the mother is prudently omitted from the action,—comes to convey his sympathy, is a beautiful illustration of Euripides' insight into the weakness of the male character.

'Such are the pair, father and son: behold your ordinary sensual man,' he seems to say. Dr. Verrall spends some time and pains in showing that Admetus is not a hero, and, doubtless, he is not heroic either to us or to Euripides. But it does not follow that an Athenian audience would share our or the master's private views. We are unconsciously influenced by centuries of romantic literature in which the relations of the sexes have been idealised. The Athenians treated women much as the baser sort still treat animals. To us Admetus seems almost inconceivably selfish and callous: probably many an Athenian never realised that his conduct was reprehensible.

Even so to-day a vegetarian has considerable difficulty in proving to the ordinary man that it is unjustifiable selfishness to take life for the gratification of appetite. 'I always have eaten meat,'

such an one will say; 'I always shall: and so did my father. Animals were created for use.' The Athenian might have used the same language about his wife.

But in the play itself no one is under any sort of delusion as to Admetus. The servant woman, the attendant, the chorus, Alcestis herself: all know him for what he is, a selfish coward. Very religious certainly he is and very hospitable: in other words, very full of absurd superstitions and very fond of having strangers in the house to divert him from himself. Heracles the ravisher, and Apollo the seducer, appreciate him as an excellent boon companion: his own household do not share their views. They know too well—and there is constant reference to this in the play—that he is 'foolish' in the Euripidean sense of the word, the slave of passions which he is unable to control. And so we may leave him: in his character Euripides explodes the fallacy that in all cases and in all circumstances man is the superior animal.

But the wonder of the Alcestis is this: in spite of the irony and cruel satire, in spite of the bitter criticism of the two doctrines, the existence of the supernatural and the superiority of man, there remain so many other threads of interest—realism and romance, pathos and humour—that a well-disposed reader can shut his eyes to the unpleasant, and

usually does. What is wanted to bring out the full meaning of Euripides' plays is a double translation ; one version written in prose by a realist with a taste for irony, the other composed by a lyric poet. Neither version will be satisfactory apart, for the spirit of Euripides is a compound of the two : neither will be final, for translations quickly age and Euripides is ever young.

IX.—The Socratic Circle

Sophocles is almost the last representative of the earlier and happier period of the Athenian Empire, their golden age as it seemed later, when to the complacent imagination of the male citizen all things seemed to be working together in the direction of progress and freedom. Progress indeed there was, and for men freedom of thought, for the intellectual atmosphere of Athens in the middle of the fifth century B.C., with its combination of clear knowledge and bracing speculation, has never been surpassed. But as a society, Athens already contained within herself the seeds of decay and destruction. The wealth of her intellectual achievement barely concealed the poverty of her social morality, and it was only by dint of firmly closing their eyes to the degradation of their women and the misery of their slaves that the Athenians maintained for a time the fond illusion that everything was for the best in the best of all possible cities.

Then came the shock of the Peloponnesian War and the inherent weaknesses of a free State which

refuses political freedom to more than half its population were cruelly revealed. For nearly thirty years, with some few breathing spaces, the struggle went on, while Athens tried to force a culture intellectually superior but morally inferior to that of many other of the Greek peoples upon a reluctant world: and in the end she failed and fell.

After the fifth century the political importance of Athens disappears; her intellectual pre-eminence is saved for her by a small group of men who under the hard teaching of war discerned the flaws of her social system and set themselves resolutely to the task of criticism and reform. The nobility of war, the nobility of birth, the nobility of sex: these are some of the prejudged questions that the Socratic Circle ventured to dispute, and their contentions, as we have them recorded in the literature of the late fifth and the early fourth centuries, form perhaps the most valuable legacy that the Greek mind has left us. But, like so much of Greek thought, their ideas require interpretation for a modern reader. Some of the greatest of the Circle, Socrates and Antisthenes, for example, we only know in the writings of other men, and we have to disentangle the master's ideas from those of his disciples. Plato and Xenophon were drawn away by metaphysics and soldiering, and social problems form only a part of their interests. Euripides and

Aristophanes were compelled to conform to the conventions of Attic tragedy and comedy, and we must always discount the influence of the stage; Euripides is often less and Aristophanes more serious than suits our ideas of a tragic and a comic writer. Lastly, for all the group except Xenophon, irony was the favourite weapon of attack, an irony so deftly veiled that it made the bitterest criticism possible, and still often passes undetected.

But even so the critics were not popular and their reforms were not accepted: Socrates was put to death; Plato found a shelter in political obscurity; Euripides, like Æschylus, passed much of his life away from Athens; Xenophon took up his home in the Peloponnese: in their lives they fought against a stubborn majority, and when they were dead the social organisation of Athenian life remained apparently unchanged. But their teaching lived on after them, and on feminist questions it derives almost an additional value from the general hostility of their fellow-countrymen.

In their criticism of the problems that we call feminism Euripides and Socrates were the initiative forces, and a close study of the former's plays is indispensable for any one who wishes to understand the position of women in Athenian life. But the plays of Euripides throw also a certain light on the position of Socrates himself. Socrates and

Euripides we know were close friends: 'which of the two gathered the sticks and which made the faggot,' so runs the ancient saying, 'no man can tell,' and in many points of family relationship they had the same experience. Euripides' mother, Cleito 'the greengrocer,' Socrates' wife, Xanthippë 'the scold,' are two of the rare women in Athenian history of whom we know even the names. Both men were lovers of women in the nobler sense, and the later misogynists revenged themselves by enlarging upon their marital infelicities. In the case of Euripides there is no real evidence to support these scandals, and even if Xanthippë was a woman of strong temper, both men were well enough satisfied with the married state to take another wife in addition to their first helpmate, when a special law, rendered necessary by the waste of male lives in the great war, gave formal sanction to such a step. Both alike agreed in condemning the misogyny of their day and knew that a man who habitually thinks ill of women has probably no very good reason to think well of himself. Both applied to women as well as to men the great doctrines of liberty, equality, fraternity.

Euripides saw in woman the equal and not the slave of man, Socrates regarded her as his natural friend and not his natural enemy. In Xenophon's Socratic books, the *Memorabilia*, the *Œconomicus*, and the

Symposium, we get the best record of the master's view of the women, for Socrates was himself too cautious ever to commit himself to the written word, and perhaps the most characteristic of the episodes is the visit to the fair hetaira, the one faithful of all the lovers of Alcibiades, described in the *Memorabilia*.

There lived in Athens a fair lady called Theodotë, whose habit it was to give her society to any one who could woo and win her. One of the company made mention of her to Socrates, remarking that the lady's beauty quite surpassed description. 'Painters,' said he, 'go to her house to paint her portrait, and she displays to them all her perfection!' 'Well,' said Socrates, 'manifestly, we too must go and see her. It is impossible from mere hearsay to realise something which surpasses description.' Thereupon his informant: 'Quick, then, and follow me.'

So off they went at once to Theodotë, and found her at home, posing to a painter. When the painter had finished, 'Friends,' said Socrates, 'ought we to be more grateful to Theodotë for displaying to us her beauty, or she to us for having come to see her? I suppose if this display is going to be more advantageous to her, she ought to be grateful to us. But if it is we who are going to make a profit from the sight, then we ought to be grateful to her.' 'Very fairly put,' said one, and Socrates resumed, 'The lady is profiting this moment by the praise she receives from us, and when we spread the tale abroad she will gain a further advantage. But, as for ourselves we are beginning to have a desire to touch what we have just now seen: when we are going away we shall feel the smart, and after we have

gone we shall still long for her. So we may reasonably say that it is we who are the servitors, and that she accepts our service.' Thereupon Theodotë: 'Well, if that is so, it would be only proper for me to thank you for coming to see me.' Afterwards Socrates noticed that the lady herself was expensively arrayed, and that her mother's dress (for her mother was in the room) and general appearance was by no means humble. There were a number of comely maidens also in attendance, showing little signs of neglect in their attire, and in all respects the household was luxuriously arranged.

'Tell me, Theodote,' said he, 'have you any land of your own?'

'I have not,' she replied.

'Well, then, I suppose your household brings you in a good income.'

'No, I have not a house.'

'Have you a factory, then?'

'No, not a factory either.'

'How then do you get what you need?'

'When I find a friend, and he is kind enough to help me, then my livelihood is assured.'

'By our lady, that is a fine thing to have. A flock of friends is far better than a flock of sheep, or goats, or oxen. But do you leave it to chance whether friends are to wing their way towards you like flies, or do you use some mechanical device?'

'Why, how could I find any device in this matter?'

'Surely, it would be much more appropriate for you than for spiders. You know how they hunt for their living. They weave gossamer webs, I believe, and anything that comes their way they take for food.'

'Do you advise me, then, to weave a hunting net?'

'No, no. You must not suppose that it is such a simple matter to catch that noble animal, a lover. Have you not noticed that even to catch such a humble thing as a hare people use many devices? Knowing that hares are night-feeders, they provide themselves with night-dogs, and use them in the chase. Furthermore, as the creatures run off at daybreak, they get other dogs to scent them out and find which way they go from their feeding ground to their forms. Again, they are swift-footed, so that they can get away in an open race, and a third class of dogs is provided to catch them in their tracks. Lastly, inasmuch as some escape even from the dogs, men set nets in their runs, so that they may fall into the meshes and be caught.'

'But what sort of contrivance should I use in hunting for lovers?'

'A man, of course, to take the place of the dog; some one able to track out and discover wealthy amateurs for you; able also to find ways of getting them into your nets.'

'Nets, forsooth! What sort of nets have I?'

One you have certainly, close enfolding and well constructed, your body. And within your body there is your heart, which teaches you the looks that charm and the words that please. It tells you to welcome true friends with a smile, and to lock out overbearing gallants; when your beloved is sick, to tend him with anxious care; when he is prospering, to share his joy; in fine, to surrender all your soul to a devout lover. I am sure you know full well how to love. Love needs a tender heart as well as soft arms. I am sure, too, that you convince your lovers of your affection not by mere phrases, but by acts of love.'

'Nay, nay, I do not use any artificial devices.'

'Well, it makes a great difference if you approach a man in the natural and proper way. You will not catch or keep a lover by force. He is a creature who can only be captured and kept constant by kindness and pleasure.'

'That is true.'

'You should only ask then of your well-wishers such services as will cost them little to render, and you should requite them with favours of the same sort. Thereby you will secure their fervent and constant love, and they will be your benefactors indeed. You will charm them most if you never surrender except when they are sharp set. You have noticed that the daintiest fare, if served before a man wants it, is apt to seem insipid; while, if he is already sated, it even produces a feeling of nausea. Create a feeling of hunger before you serve your banquet; then even humble food will appear sweet.'

'How can I create this hunger in my friends?'

'First, never serve them when they are sated. Never suggest it even. Wait until the feeling of repletion has quite disappeared and they begin again to be sharp set. Even then at first let your suggestions be only of most modest conversation. Seem not to wish to yield Fly from them—and fly again; until they feel the pinch of hunger. That is your moment. The gift is the same as when a man desired it not; but wondrous different now its value.'

Theodotë: 'Why do you not join me in the hunt, and help me to catch lovers?'

'I will, certainly,' said he, 'if you can persuade me to come.'

'Nay, how can I do that?'

'You must look yourself, and find a way if you want me.'

'Come to my house then, often.'

Then Socrates, jesting at his own indifference to business, replied:

'It is no easy matter for me to take a holiday. I am always kept busy by my private and public work. Moreover, I have my lady friends, who will never let me leave them night or day. They would always be having me teach them love-charms and incantations.'

'What, do you know that, too?'

'Why, what else is the reason, think you, that Apollodorus and Antisthenes never leave my side? Why have Cebes and Simmias come all the way from Thebes to stay with me? You may be quite sure that not without love-charms and incantations and magic wheels may this be brought about.'

'Lend me your wheel, then, that I may use it on you.

'Nay, I do not want to be drawn to you. I want you to come to me.'

'Well, I will come. But be sure and be at home.'

'I will be at home to you, unless there be some lady with me who is dearer even than yourself.'

It is a significant incident, charmingly related by Xenophon, but not altogether charming in itself, although the humorous irony of Socrates may hide from careless readers all the darker sides of the picture. But Socrates himself is entirely lovable. There is nothing furtive, nothing patronising in the philosopher's attitude. He behaves to Theodotē as he would behave to every one. He admires her beauty, and, like Goldsmith, recognises that a beautiful woman is a benefactress to mankind. But while he knows the strength of her position,

he realises its weakness also, and there is a shade of pity in his admiration.

A similar appreciation of women is shown in many passages of the *Symposium*; for example, when Socrates says, 'Women need no perfume: they are compounds themselves of fragrance.' There is that Socratic paradox, also, after the dancing-girl's performance:

> 'This is one proof, among very many, that woman's nature is in no way inferior to man's: she has no lack either of judgment or physical strength.'

He continues his argument by advising his friends to *teach* their wives; and he deals with the weakest point in woman's life—the ignorance in which they were kept. 'Do not be afraid,' he says; 'teach her all that you would wish your companion to know.'

Thereupon Anthisthenes puts the pertinent question: 'If that is your idea, Socrates, why do you not try and train Xanthippë, who is, I believe, the most difficult of all wives, present, past, and future?' To this he gets the following reply:

> 'I have noticed,' says Socrates, 'that people who wish to become good horsemen get a spirited horse, not a tame, docile animal. They think that if they can manage a fiery steed they will find no difficulty with an ordinary horse. My case is the same. I wanted to be a citizen of the world and to mix with all men.

So I took her. I am quite sure that if I can endure her, I shall find no difficulty in ordinary company.'

Thus Socrates draws benefit even from a shrewish wife. His ideas of a happy marriage, and the best means of securing that happiness, are set out for us by Xenophon in the *Œconomicus*. Ischomachus, Socrates' interlocutor, is for all practical purposes Xenophon himself, and the whole passage should be compared with those delightful stories of conjugal happiness—the tale of Panthea, and the wife of Tigranes—which the historian gives us in the Education of Cyrus. The dialogue begins by Socrates asking Ischomachus how he won his sobriquet of 'honest gentleman'—surely not by staying at home!

'No,' replies Ischomachus, 'I do not spend my days indoors: my wife is quite capable of managing our household without my help.'

'Ah, that is what I want to know. Did you train your wife yourself to be all that a wife should be? Or, when you took her from her parents, did she possess enough knowledge to perform her share of house management?'

'Possess knowledge when I took her? Why, she was not fifteen years old, and until then she had lived under careful surveillance—to see and hear, and ask as little as possible. All that she knew was how to take wool and turn it into a dress. All that she had seen was how the spinning-women have their daily tasks assigned. As regards control of appetite, she

had certainly received a sound education, and that, I think, is all-important.'

Ischomachus then proceeds to detail his system of education. It begins with husband and wife offering sacrifice together and praying that fortune may aid in teaching and learning what is best for both. Then, as soon as the wife 'is tamed to the hand, and not too frightened to take part in conversation,' the husband explains that they are now partners together, at present in the house, in future in any children that may be born to them. They have each contributed a portion to the common stock, and must now work together in protecting their joint interests. The wife agrees to this, but doubts her own capacity. 'Everything depends on you,' she says; 'my business, mother said, was to be modest and temperate.' The husband then explains the true functions of man and woman and their points of difference. Man has a greater capacity than woman for enduring heat and cold, wayfaring and route-marching. God meant for him outdoor work. Woman has less capacity for bearing fatigue; she is more affectionate, more timorous. God has imposed upon her the indoor work. Finally, to men and women alike in equal measure, God gives memory, carefulness, and self-control. Custom agrees with the divine ordinance. For a woman to stay quiet at home, instead of roaming abroad,

is no disgrace: for a man to remain indoors is discreditable. The wife is like the queen bee, on whom all the work of the hive depends; and a good mistress soon wins the loyal love of all her servants. So the conversation proceeds, and with this beautiful sentence the first conjugal lesson ends:

> 'But your sweetest joy will be to show yourself my superior, and to make me your servant; then you need not fear that as the years roll on you will lose your place of honour in the house; you will be sure that, though you are no longer young, your honour will increase; even as you become a better partner to myself and the children, and a better guardian of the home; for it is not beauty, but virtue, that nurtures the growth of a good name.'

But Ischomachus does not confine his teaching to words. He explains to Socrates how once he asked his wife for some household article which she could not find, and how deeply she blushed at her heedless ignorance. So he gives her a practical lesson in household management by taking her over the house and explaining the uses of the various rooms and different utensils, expatiating the while on the beauty of order—'for a beauty like the cadence of sweet music dwells even in pots and pans set out in neat array.' His wife profits by the lesson, and henceforth everything is in its proper place.

He deals faithfully, too, with that most pardonable of woman's weaknesses, the desire to please, that

leads some ladies to attempt to improve upon nature. So when one day he finds his wife with powder and rouge upon her cheeks, and wearing high-heeled shoes, he begins like this :

'Dear wife, would you think me a good partner in our business if I were to make a display of unreal wealth, false money, and sham purples, wood coated with gold ?'

'Nay, surely not,' she replies.

'And as regards my body, would you hold me as more lovable if I were to anoint myself with pigments and paint my eyes ?'

'Nay, I would rather look into your eyes and see them bright with health.'

'Believe me, then, dear wife, I am not better pleased with this white powder and red paint than I should be with your natural hue.'

So after that day the young wife gives up cosmetics, and on her husband's advice takes healthy exercise instead ; the physical training he recommends being 'to knead the dough and roll the paste ; to shake the coverlets and make the beds.'

With one last anecdote we must end. Socrates asks his friend whether beside his practical wisdom he has any rhetorical and judicial skill.

'Of course I have,' says Ischomachus. 'I am always hearing and debating cases in my own household. Yes, and before to-day I have been taken on one side, and have had to stand my trial, to see what punishment I should bear and what fine I should pay.'

'And how do you get on ?' says Socrates.

'When I have the advantage of truth on my side,

well enough ; but when I have not truth with me I can never make the worse cause appear the better.'

'And how is that ? Who is the judge ? '

'*My wife.*'

Ischomachus' home, at least, is no doll's-house. His wife is as far removed from the humble drudge with whom the ordinary Athenian was familiar as she is from the painted odalisque who to the Ionian was the ideal of the perfect woman.

X.—Aristophanes

The work of Aristophanes is a pendant to that of Euripides, and is often inspired by a much more serious purpose than is commonly supposed. Aristophanes is no mere vulgar buffoon, and most of his obscenity is an empty parade made necessary by the conditions of the Attic stage which Aristophanes himself in the course of his career rendered obsolete. He was a member of the Socratic Circle (the famous Symposium ends with Socrates expounding to Agathon and Aristophanes the nature of tragedy and comedy, and explaining the essential similarity of their functions), and in his early manhood he fell under the spell of the great tragedian. Of all his comedies there is hardly one which in language, music, and dramatic technique does not reveal the intimate harmony that exists between the two men. Aristophanes and Euripides, like our Shelley, were born to be lyric poets, and they both possess the divine gift of melody. But they were interested in so many other things, in politics, in feminism, and in social reform, that art with them often takes the second place. As men they are incomparably

greater than such self-centred poets as Sophocles ; as artists they neither aim at nor achieve his academic perfection. Their methods are curiously alike, and it is because Aristophanes knows Euripides so well, and is in such intimate sympathy with him, that the constant parody of the Euripidean style in the comedies never becomes wearisome.

Parody, gross humour, indecency even, these were the qualities that a comic poet at Athens had necessarily to display, and Aristophanes, having chosen his medium of expression, is compelled to obey the restrictions of the comic stage. Moreover, it is obvious that he enjoys indulging his humour to the utmost. The wit of Euripides is restrained and ironical, with something of the bitterness of old age ; Aristophanes in most of his plays has the exuberance of youthful spirits and an overflowing stock of fantastic inventions.

But a dramatist, even a comic dramatist, however fantastic and inventive his humour may be, must have some foundation of serious purpose, and that foundation Aristophanes takes very largely from Euripides. His three chief themes are the same as those of the tragedian : firstly, that war is a curse—it is useful perhaps for politicians and soldiers, but only brings disaster to real workers ; secondly, that a belief in gods made in mortal shape is absurd—such a belief will certainly lead to farcical situations,

which if treated realistically will be excellent material for a comic poet ; thirdly, that women are as capable, intellectually and morally, as men—their experience of house-management especially fits them for carrying on the business of a State, and a feminist administration might solve many problems that have proved too hard for men. The first of these themes appears in the plot of the *Acharnians*, the *Peace*, and the *Knights* ; the second in the *Birds*, the *Frogs*, and the *Plutus* ; the feminist plays are the *Women at the Festival*, the *Lysistrata*, and the *Women in Assembly*.

It is obvious that the treatment of these themes in tragedy and comedy will be different ; but the initial point of view is very much the same. As for the abuse of Euripides, and there is plenty in the comedies, it is merely part of the comic game, and it is foolish to take it seriously. Aristophanes, Euripides, Plato, and Socrates were all close friends, as intimate one with the other as are our leading politicians, and to speak of Aristophanes 'attacking' Euripides and Socrates is to misread the situation.

It is not to be supposed that all the members of the Socratic Circle thought alike on all subjects, and even as regards feminism there are some points of difference between Euripides and Aristophanes. The comic poet is rather interested in the woman's cause than devoted to it, and in many of his plays

he certainly hesitates between the gross realism of the phallic god and the new ideas of feminist doctrine. Often, too, in his theatre women occupy as insignificant a place as they did in the actual life of his time. In the *Wasps*, for example, Philocleon's household apparently consists of his grown-up son and the attendant slaves: nothing is said of wife or daughter. In the *Knights*, 'Demos'—John Bull—has no Mrs. Bull to keep him company: his domestic arrangements are in the hands of men slaves. In the *Clouds* there is a vivid picture of Socrates at home: house, furniture, and pupils are all described, but nothing of Xanthippe. So in the *Acharnians* and the *Peace* we have household scenes, but no women take part in the action: the women are there, but they are persons of no importance. Trygæus, before setting off on his adventurous voyage, bids an affectionate farewell to his little children, but for his wife he has no message. The Megarian sells his two daughters for a handful of leeks and a measure of salt, and then prays to all his saints that he may be lucky enough to get as good a price for his mother and his wife.

A realist, depicting life at Athens in the fifth century, was compelled to give women an insignificant rôle, but even in this group of plays Aristophanes makes one exception, the exception, perhaps, that proves the rule, for even under the harem system the

masterful woman will sometimes come to the front, and Haroun al Raschid goes in fear of Zobeida. In the *Clouds*, Strepsiades is married and by no means independent of his wife: the lady is mentioned, although she takes no part in the play, and the reasons of this difference are instructive. Strepsiades himself is a person of inferior social position, lacking both in will-power and intellectual force; his wife is a woman of property, the daughter of a noble family and herself of determined character. Using all these advantages, she is just able to hold her own with her feeble, foolish husband, and to insist at least on a compromise when their opinions differ.

But it is possible to make too much of the absence of women characters, for the conditions of performance at the Lenæan festival were all against feminine interests, and even though the plot of many of the comedies has little to do with women, there are constant flashes that reveal the author's feminist sympathies. Of all the episodes in the *Birds* there is none quite so freshly humorous as the arrest of Iris, the girl messenger of the Gods, and even in the midst of the fierce political raillery of the *Knights* there comes the delicious interlude of the lady triremes meeting in council; the old stager Nauphantë, addressing the assembly first and revealing the goings-on of the Government, followed

by the shy young thing 'who has never come near men,' and is determined to keep her independence, 'heaven forfend, no man shall ever be my master.' Indeed, considering the state of Athens and the necessity that lay upon a comic poet of suiting the tastes of his audience, the real surprise is that no less than three of the remaining eleven plays—the *Lysistrata*, the *Women at the Festival*, and the *Women in Assembly*—should be concerned with the feminist movement and be written in open advocacy of the women's cause.

The Women at the Festival—*Thesmophoriazusæ*—is the lightest of the three, and is really a very brilliantly written feminist 'revue.' Euripides is the 'compère,' and in various disguises takes part in most of the incidents. He has heard that the women, now assembled in their own festival to which no men are admitted, intend to have him put to death, firstly for being a playwright and secondly as a slanderer of womenkind. He goes round to his friends to save him (the scene is a parody on the *Alcestis*), and first of all to his fellow-dramatist, Agathon. But Agathon, whose music is then burlesqued, is too much like a woman to be of any assistance. He is another of the inner Socratic Circle, but in the way of jest the most infamous conduct is imputed to him: his appearance is as ambiguous as his morals, and all he can do for

Euripides is to lend him some articles of women's dress for the purpose of a disguise. So Euripides has to fall back on his father-in-law, Mnesilochus, the buffoon of the piece, and there follows one of those scenes of disrobing with which we are familiar on the modern stage. The old gentleman is undressed, shaved all over and arrayed in woman's garments, *i.e.,* he exchanges his rough white blanket for a finer yellow one; winds a band-corset round his breast and puts on a hair-net and bonnet. He is now to all appearances a woman and goes to the Thesmophorian Festival to find out the details of the women's proposal.

The women assemble, and in an elaborate burlesque of a public meeting recount their grievances against Euripides. It is because of the poet that men have become so suspicious: they scent a lover everywhere, spy on their wives, and lock up the store cupboards. Old men who once would take young wives now remain unmarried, for the poet has told them, 'When an old man marries a young wife, the lady is master.' Finally, by his atheistical doctrines, Euripides has ruined many an honest flower-girl, for men do not offer garlands now to the gods. Then Mnesilochus gets up for the defence. 'I detest the fellow as much as you do,' he says; 'but it is unreasonable to be annoyed with him for talking about one or two of our weaknesses—we have ten thousand which

he has never mentioned.' He then proceeds to dilate on some of the frailties which Euripides has omitted; but he is stopped by his angry audience. 'There is nothing so bad as a woman who is naturally shameless'—the chorus say—'*except it be a woman.*'

A fierce discussion begins, until their arguments are interrupted by the appearance of Cleisthenes, one of those womanish men so unpleasantly familiar in Athens, who tells the assembly that a real man is among them. Suspicion at once falls on Mnesilochus; he is discovered by plain evidence to be of the male sex, and is seized by the women. He makes a gallant attempt to escape by snatching a baby from a woman's lap, and holding it to ransom (a parody on Euripides' *Telephus*); but, when he unfastens the child's wrappings, it is not a baby, but a leather skin, full of wine, which the lady has brought for her private refreshment during the proceedings. He then decides to send to Euripides for help, and a parody of the *Palamedes* ends the first part of the play.

The intermezzo, as we might call it, between the two acts is a humorous statement of the women's case on strict Euripidean lines:

> Each and every one [the chorus sings] abuses the tribe of women: we are everything that is bad. Well, then, *why do you marry us*? Why do you keep

us indoors, as though we were something very, very precious? Why, if we peep out of a window, does every man want to get a good view of our face? As a matter of fact, women are better than men, not worse; they are less greedy, less dishonest, less vulgar; lastly, they alone are the *mothers* of heroes.

The second act is a series of attempts by Euripides to rescue his defender. In the first episode the tragedian appears disguised as the Menelaus of his Helen. Old Mnesilochus is the fair but frail queen, and the scene is *supposed* to change to Egypt. But the women refuse to let their captive free, and he is finally handed over to a north-country policeman, an illiterate gentleman with a very strong accent. On him Euripides tries the effect of another tragedy. Disguised as Perseus he insists that Mnesilochus is the captive maiden, Andromeda, and that he has come to release her. But the policeman proves obdurate. Then Euripides plays his last card. Remembering that all policemen have a *faiblesse* for the weaker sex, he disguises himself as an old woman, and comes in, leading by the hand a young and attractive female. The policeman begins at once to soften, and when the plump flute-girl sits down on his knee he capitulates, murmuring, 'What a swaät toöng: it's reaäl Attic hoöney!' A last vestige of professional caution makes him ask the old lady her name. Euripides, having to choose a title, chooses a good one, and

says, 'Artemisia,' which the policeman enters as 'Artamouxia' in his note-book, and then, handing over the custody of his prisoner to the old lady he retires indoors with his young aquaintance. The other pair hasten to make their escape, and the play ends with the policeman's despairing cry, Artamouxia, Artamouxia, where are you?'

The *Lysistrata*, 'breaker up of armies,' is a much stronger play, and the heroine is a masterpiece of dramatic characterisation. From the beginning of the action, when she stands in the darkness waiting for the women she has summoned, and frowning with impatience—'although a frown spoils her looks,' as her one companion tells her—until the end, when, her purpose accomplished, she can say, 'Let man stand by woman and woman by man. Good luck to all, and pray God that we make no more of these mistakes,' she is a real living woman. If Aristophanes had written nothing else, *Lysistrata* shows that he understood the female mind almost as well as Euripides himself: better far than most women authors, except only the incomparable Jane, to whose Emma in masterfulness and independence the Athenian lady bears a close resemblance. The plot of the play is simple. Under the lead of Lysistrata the women of Athens make a league with the women of Sparta, Bœotia, Corinth, and the other

Greek States (for the solidarity of women is one of the key-notes of the play), to stop the war. For this purpose they put into effect both active and passive measures: they bind themselves by oath to have no further intercourse with their husbands until peace is made (the women at first object, but under the lead of the athletic Spartan finally agree), and they also seize the Acropolis with the treasury. The old men left at home, and the officials, for most of the men are at the war, try to use force; but Lysistrata has marshalled and drilled her women. In a very vivid scene the men attack, but, 'Up guards, and at them!' cries Lysistrata; and the forces of male law and order, as represented by the Scythian policemen, are put to ignominious flight. Then the men think it expedient to propose a friendly meeting, and the 'conversation' between Lysistrata and the Chief Commissioner is the most instructive part of the play.

'Why have you seized the treasury?' he asks. Lysistrata explains that all wars depend on financial considerations, and that the women mean to stop supplies. His argument, that women have no administrative skill or financial knowledge, is countered by the plain facts of home management. 'It is not the same thing,' says the Commissioner; 'this is a war fund.' Then Lysistrata declares that the war has to stop—now, at once.

In our retiring modesty we have put up long enough with what you men have been doing. You would not let us speak, but we have not been at all satisfied with you. *We* knew what was going on, although we stay indoors. Over and over again we were told of some new big mistake you had made. With pain in our hearts we would put on a smile and ask, 'What have you done to-day about the peace?' 'But—what's that to you?' our man would say. 'Hold your tongue.' And so I did, then (says Lysistrata), but I am not going to now. I have heard the strain quite long enough, 'Men must see to war's alarms.' This is my version of the tune: 'Women shall see to war's alarms'; and if you listen to my advice you will not be troubled by war's alarms any more. All you have to do is to hold your tongue, as we used to do.

At this the Commissioner breaks in furiously: 'You accursed baggage, I hold my tongue before you! Why, you are wearing a veil now to hide your face. May I die rather.' But his anger does him little good.

'If that is your difficulty,' says Lysistrata, 'take my veil'—and she puts it on his head—'and now hold your tongue; moreover, here is my wool-basket, so you may munch beans and card the wool; for now "Women, women never shall be slaves."' And so the scene ends with the triumphant chorus.

Between this, the first act, and the second there is a short interval of time; and when we see Lysistrata again she is having some difficulty in keeping her women together and away from their husbands.

'You long for your men,' she says ; don't you think they are longing for you? I am sure they are finding the nights very hard. Hold out, good friends, and bear it for a little while longer.' Her arguments are successful, and soon the first man comes in, with a baby in his arms, prepared to submit to any terms. But till the peace is made, no arrangement is possible and the poor husband goes away unsatisfied. Finally, a joint deputation of Spartans and Athenians appear before Lysistrata. She, as a woman, and therefore, she says, a person of sense, has no difficulty in arranging for them terms of peace which are satisfactory to both sides ; and so the play ends with a 'necklace' dance, men and women dancing hand in hand.

But this brief summary gives little idea of all the devices of stage-craft in which the *Lysistrata* abounds. It is eminently an acting play, and can still fill a theatre. The language is certainly gross and its heroine is entirely lacking in modest reticence, but a glance at the French adaptation by M. Donnay, of the Academy, and especially at the additional episodes there introduced, will prove that grossness is not the worst thing in the world, and that a quiet tongue does not always mean a virtuous mind.

The Women in Assembly, *Ecclesiazusæ*, is much less vigorous. Written twenty years later than the *Lysistrata*, it shows plain signs of old age and

failing powers. Euripides and Socrates have both passed away; the Socratic Circle has broken up. Tragedy is dead, and comedy is dying, for Aristophanes has lost most of that 'vis comica' which was his most wonderful possession. The influence of Plato is substituted for the influence of Euripides, and the play is a parody of feminist theories as they are developed in the Republic.

The construction, however, is poor: the action halts and changes midway in the play; the first part is effective enough, but it would be more effective if we did not remember the *Lysistrata*, whose themes it repeats with less vigour.

At the beginning of the play Praxagora is waiting in the darkness for the women she has summoned to appear. They have resolved to disguise themselves as men, and to attend the assembly which has been called for that morning. There they are to propose and carry a resolution that the State shall be handed over to the management of women. Presently they begin to assemble; their husbands are safely in bed and asleep, for their wives have taken measures that they should have a restful night. Sticks, cloaks, shoes, and false beards are produced and adjusted, but before they set out to pack the assembly Praxagora proposes a rehearsal of their arguments. The ladies who have confined their attention to *looking* like men prove not very

expert at speaking in the male style, and Praxagora herself has to give them a sample speech.

> Things go wrong [she says] because we choose our government on wrong principles. It is a government by classes, and every one considers his own personal interests. Public money is paid away for private gain. A government of women would alter all this, for women by experience in house management know how to get full value for money. Secondly, women are conservative, and would never agree to any violent change in the finances or the tariff; they are natural economists, and specious cries of fair trade would have no effect upon them. Thirdly, as war ministers, they are certain to be successful; their experience in providing meals will ensure that the soldiers are well fed, and they are not likely to risk unduly the lives of their own sons. Lastly, women are so used to trickery that it will be very hard to trick them. *Therefore*, without any further talking or inquiry as to what women are likely to do, the best thing is to entrust them with the government.

The women by the end of the speech have learnt their parts, and with one last instruction to thrust their elbows into the face of any policeman who tries to interfere they all set out for the assembly. Then Blepyrus, the elderly husband of Praxagora, appears, and the play begins to deteriorate, for it is one of the most dexterous touches in the *Lysistrata* that the husbands are for the most part away from home, and therefore can take no part in the action. Blepyrus and his neighbours have found that their wives have disappeared together with their cloaks and

shoes. While they are standing in doubt they hear strange news. The assembly convened that morning to consider the vital question of State reform is already over ; it was so well attended and so punctual to time that many men came too late to vote or to receive their attendance fee. A resolution has been passed unanimously that tailors shall provide clothes and bakers bread, free gratis to all ; and, furthermore, that the government shall be in the hands of women. A good-looking young man, who made a most effective speech, was chiefly responsible for this change of policy. He pointed out that women could keep a secret far better than men ; that they were in the habit of trusting one another, and that they never would be likely to plot against the government; moreover, everything but woman-government had been tried already without much success, and the experiment was well worth making. Blepyrus and his friends acquiesce in the *fait accompli*, and when Praxagora returns she learns from her husband that women are now in authority. The socialistic State begins at once to take shape. Praxagora decrees a community of property—land, food, slaves, belong now to the State—every one possesses everything. Women are part of the community of goods, but to avoid disputes the less well-favoured women and men are to have the first choice of partners, and such unions are purely temporary.

Law courts, gambling saloons, and night clubs are all summarily closed; for these appurtenances of civilisation are incompatible either with socialism or feminism. The difficulty of work is disposed of by the convenient institution of slavery, and a *régime* of universal happiness and feasting begins.

Thus far the first section of the play. The second part, which is very inferior, attempts to show the working of the new system. Praxagora disappears, and the characters are mere mechanical figures. A man, A; a man, B; a young man; a young woman; three old women. The scenes are coarse and uninteresting, nor is the prosiness of the dialogue relieved by any of the vivid touches of humour which mark the poet's earlier plays. Finally, this section, like the first, ends with a banquet, given by the State, and open to all.

The *Ecclesiazusæ* is plainly inspired by Plato's theories of communism and feminism as we have them now in the *Republic* and the *Laws*. A further example of the connection between the comedian and the philosopher is the Aristophanic tale of the origin of sex in Plato's Symposium. The story—a Platonic myth with a difference—is so good a specimen both of Aristophanes' humour and of the gay fashion in which the Greeks anticipate modern science that it is a pity its length prevents quotation.

In ancient days [according to Aristophanes] there were not two sexes but three, the children of the sun, the earth, and the moon. Men were round in shape, with four feet and hands, two faces, and they were able both to walk and to roll. In the pride of their strength they rebelled against heaven, and Zeus cut them in twain. Apollo was bidden to heal the places, but the two halves pined one for the other, and so in pity the god turned their bodies round, and men became in shape such as we see them now.

There are many other details, but the most striking point in the story is the recognition of the original identity of sex. The man and the woman are not separate and opposite, but rather complementary halves of one organism, which once included both; they are a divided whole, and that is why men and women yearn one for the other. How far the tale is Aristophanes' invention, how far Plato's, cannot be decided, but the doctrine of the identity of sex-qualification is the common possession of all the Socratic Circle, and forms as clearly the basis of Plato's serious philosophy as it does of the humorous apologue of Aristophanes.

XI.—PLATO

PLATO differs from most of the Socratic Circle in that he is, above all things, a visionary and a theorist. He is essentially a masculine genius (with him we hear nothing of wife and children), and he lacks that grip of reality which the natural feminist, Euripides, instinctively possesses. He regarded the condition of society in his native city with a mixture of dislike and contempt, and he saw that the main cause of this condition was the indifference to women and children which the ordinary Athenian prided himself on displaying. In his feminism and his educational reforms, Plato is deeply influenced by Spartan teaching, but the main structure is his own work, based not on any actual experience, but on ideal theory. In this idealism lies both the strength and weakness of his feminist doctrine. He refuses to allow himself to be influenced, as Aristotle after him was influenced, by the actual state of inferiority to which Athenian women had been reduced; but in forming a society which should be the opposite of the degenerate Athens of his day, he is inclined

to disregard some of the invincible facts of human nature.

Plato's feminist doctrines are most clearly stated in the fifth book of the *Republic* and the sixth, seventh, and eighth books of the *Laws*. These works are accessible to English readers (or, rather, their rough substance is accessible, for we can never reproduce the delicate music of Plato's prose, and his subtle irony evaporates in English) in Jowett's translation, and in the excellent version of the *Republic* by Davies and Vaughan. But it may be convenient to give a brief summary of his argument.

In the fifth book of the *Republic* the ideal State is being discussed, and the rule κοινὰ τὰ τῶν φίλων ('among friends everything is common property') has been laid down. It has, moreover, been made applicable to wives and children, for Plato at first hardly escapes from the fallacy that a man's wife is as much a piece of property as a dog or a table. The organization of the communistic *régime* in detail then comes up for consideration, but it is unanimously resolved that the question of community of women is of vital importance and must be explained at once. The philosopher accordingly, with some pretended reluctance, begins with a prayer to Nemesis—'I am on a slippery road, and fear lest missing my footing I drag my

friends down with me'—and thus approaches his subject:

'The aim of our theory was, I believe, to make our men, as it were, guardians of a flock?'

'Yes.'

'Let us keep on the same track and give corresponding rules for the propagation of the species, and for rearing the young; and let us observe whether we find them suitable or not.'

'How do you mean?'

'Thus. Do we think that the females of watch-dogs ought to guard the flock along with the males, and hunt with them, and share in all their other duties; or that the females ought to stay at home, because they are disabled by having to breed and rear the cubs, while the males are to labour and be charged with all the care of the flocks?'

'We expect them to share in whatever is to be done; only we treat the females as the weaker, and the males as the stronger.'

'Is it possible to use animals for the same work if you do not give them the same training and education?'

'It is not.'

'If, then, we are to employ the women in the same duties as the men, we must give them the same instructions?'

'Yes.'

'To the men we give music and gymnastic.'

'Yes.'

'Then we must train the women also in the same two arts, giving them, besides, a military education and treating them in the same way as the men.'

The professional humorist is then requested to refrain from the obvious jokes suggested by the idea

of women stripped for exercise or old ladies practising athletics, and to remember that all such things are purely matters of custom. The real question is whether the nature of the human female is such as to enable her to share in all the employments of the male, or whether she is wholly unequal to any, or equal to some and not to others; and, if so, to which class military service belongs. Women certainly are different from men, but we must not be misled by the word 'different.' A bald-headed man is different from a long-haired man, but he may be just as good a cobbler, or a statesman. So women differ from men in the part they play in the propagation of the species; but that difference does not affect the question as to whether men and women should engage in the same pursuits. The argument of the adaptability of the sexes to various occupations is discussed, and this point is reached:

'I conclude then, my friend, that none of the occupations which comprehend the ordering of a State belong to woman as woman, nor yet to man as man; but natural gifts are to be found here and there in both sexes alike; and, so far as her nature is concerned, the woman is admissible to all pursuits as well as the man: though in all of them the woman is weaker than the man.'

'Precisely so.'

'Shall we, then, appropriate all virtues to men and none to women?'

'How can we?'

'On the contrary, we shall hold, I imagine, that one woman may have talents for medicine, and another be without them; and that one may be musical and another unmusical?'

'Undoubtedly.'

'And shall we not also say, that one woman may have qualifications for gymnastic exercises and for war, and another be unwarlike and without a taste for gymnastics?'

'I think we shall.'

'Again, may there not be a love of knowledge in one, and a distaste for it in another? And may not one be spirited, and another spiritless?'

'True again.'

'If that be so, there are some women who are fit, and others who are unfit, for the office of guardians. For were not those the qualities we selected, in the case of men, as marking their fitness for that office?'

'Yes, they were.'

'Then, as far as the guardianship of a state is concerned, there is no difference between the natures of the man and of the woman, but only various degrees of weakness and strength?'

'Apparently there is none.'

'Then we shall have to select duly qualified women also to share in the life and official labours of the duly qualified men; since we find that they are competent to the work, and of kindred nature with the men.'

It seems to Plato that it is both practicable and desirable that men and women should have the same training and the same duties; not, indeed, all men and all women, for Plato's is an aristocratic State and he is chiefly legislating for his guardian class,

but at least the better men and the better women. So he does not shrink from absolute similarity of education :

> Then the wives of our guardians must strip for their exercises, inasmuch as they will put on virtue instead of raiment, and must bear their part in war and the other duties comprised in the guardianship of the State, and must engage in no other occupations : though of these tasks the lighter parts must be given to the women rather than to the men, in consideration of the weakness of their sex. But as for the man who laughs at the idea of undressed women going through gymnastic exercises, as a means of realising what is most perfect, his ridicule is but 'unripe fruit plucked from the tree of wisdom,' and he knows not, to all appearance, what he is laughing at or what he is doing : for it is, and ever will be, a most excellent maxim, that the useful is noble and the hurtful base.

Thus the first wave of the discussion is successfully surmounted : the second and more dangerous is the proposition that wives and children shall be held in common. The company refuse to admit without discussion that it is either desirable or practicable, and a double line of argument is used. If men and women are educated and live together, human nature will soon bring about even closer associations. Any irregular union would be an offence against the State, and it is of the first importance to science that the best citizens should have the largest number of children. Therefore marriages and births must

be a matter of State regulation, and any possible discontent must be averted by an elaborate system of pretence. The details are fixed :

'As fast as the children are born they will be received by officers appointed for the purpose, whether men or women, or both : for I presume that the State offices also will be held in common both by men and women.'

'They will.'

'Well, these officers, I suppose, will take the children of good parents and place them in the general nursery under the charge of certain nurses, living apart in a particular quarter of the city ; while the issue of inferior parents, and all imperfect children that are born to the others, will be concealed, as is fitting, in some mysterious and unknown hiding-place.'

'Yes, if the breed of the guardians is to be kept pure.'

'And will not these same officers have to superintend the rearing of the children, bringing the mothers to the nursery when their breasts are full, but taking every precaution that no mother shall know her own child, and providing other women that have milk, if the mothers have not enough : and must they not take care to limit the time during which the mothers are to suckle the children, committing the task of sitting up at night, and other troubles incident to infancy, to nurses and attendants ?'

'You make child-bearing a very easy business for the wives of the guardians.'

'Yes, and so it ought to be.'

The second argument may be briefly stated. In the ideal State there will be no such thing as private property : a man will not have a house or dogs of his own, *therefore* (for our philosopher again seems

hardly to realise that the analogy between house and wife is not quite exact), he will not have a wife and children of his own. The whole subject concludes with a return to the original topic of equality of opportunity in these terms :

'Then you concede the principle that the women are to be put upon the same footing as the men, according to our description, in education, in bearing children, and in watching over the other citizens, and that whether they remain at home or are sent into the field, they are to share the duties of guardianship with the men, and join with them in the chase like dogs, and have everything in common with them so far as it is at all possible, and that in so doing they will be following the most desirable course and not violating the natural relation which ought to govern the mutual fellowship of the sexes ?'

'I do concede all this,' he replied.

'Then does it not remain for us,' I proceeded, 'to determine whether this community can possibly subsist among men as it can among other animals, and what are the conditions of its possibility ?'

'You have anticipated me in a suggestion I was about to make.'

'As for their warlike operations, I suppose it is easy to see how they will be conducted.'

'How ?' he asked.

'Why, both sexes will take the field together and they will also carry with them such of their children as are strong enough, in order that, like the children of all other craftsmen, they may be spectators of those occupations in which, when grown up, they will themselves be engaged : and they will require them, besides looking on, to act as servants and attendants in all the

duties of war, and to wait upon their fathers and mothers.'

It will be noticed that Plato does not shrink from the question of military service for women. If a man is unwilling or unable to defend his country, he certainly has no claim to citizen rights, nor has a woman. It may reasonably be argued that the qualification for a vote is neither property nor sex, but the proof that the individual has passed through the period of training necessary to qualify him as a defender of the fatherland. The qualities necessary for a soldier are three: courage, strength, and skill. No one acquainted with women can doubt that they possess the first: in the passive courage which a modern soldier chiefly needs it is possible that women have a slight advantage over men, and they usually recover more quickly from wounds. The strength that is required in modern warfare is chiefly endurance: the power to stand exposure to the weather, insufficient food, lack of sleep and comfort; marching capacity. No one who knows the vagabonds and strollers of our English roads will say that women are not capable of supporting all these hardships as well as men. The female tramp is every whit as sturdy and hardy as her male companion. Finally, the skill to handle a gun and the power of shooting straight are matters almost entirely of training: the natural qualities, a steady hand and

a sharp eye, that help such a training are by no means predominantly male characteristics.

Plato for his part is very insistent on this question, and returns to it several times in the *Laws*. The State is to maintain schools, where the art of war in all its branches shall be taught to males and females alike. Gymnastics and horsemanship are as suitable to women as to men. Boys and girls together must learn the use of the bow, the javelin, and the sling, and in every well-ordered community at least one day a month shall be set aside for warlike exercise, in which men, women and children shall take part. Female education will include a definite military training: the girls will learn how to use their weapons and to move about lightly in armour; the grown woman will study evolutions and tactics. Finally, in all public festivals and competitions the unmarried girls shall compete with the youths in running and in contests in armour.

It is on this point of military training, perhaps, that Plato stands apart from modern sentiment: most of his other ideals of feminine education are in process of being realised, even that which allowed the educated woman to become herself a teacher, and rank with male colleagues. In the inner circle of the Academy, the first University College of which we know, men and women met on equal terms, and shared responsiblities and privileges. The names

of two such women (neither of them, be it noted, Athenians) are recorded for us by Dicæarchus and Lastheneia of Mantinea and Axiothea of Phlius, 'who even used to wear male attire,' hold out their hands across the centuries to Mrs. Bryant and Miss Busk.

Plato, indeed, in spite of his idealism, is often very practical, and on the question of marriage his doctrine is most sound.

> The simple law of marriage is this: A man *must* marry before he is thirty-five; if not, he shall be fined and lose all his privileges. Mankind are immortal because they leave children behind them; and for a man to deprive himself of immortality is impiety. He who obeys the law shall be free and pay no fine; but the disobedient shall pay a yearly fine, in order that he may not imagine that his celibacy will bring him ease or profit: moreover, he shall not share in any of the honours which the State gives to the aged.

Marriage is to be regarded as a duty, and 'every man shall follow, not after the marriage which is most pleasing to himself, but after that which is most beneficial to the State.' This cannot be effected by definite regulations, but we should 'try and charm the spirits of men into believing' that their children are of more importance than themselves, and that a child's disposition will depend upon the happy blending of its parents.

Plato realises that children are the State's vital

interest, and his concern for them extends to the period before birth. Husband and wife are to consider how they are to produce for the State the best and fairest specimens of children which they can. If proper attention is given to anything, success is certain ; and the eugenic system is to be under the definite control of a committee of women, who shall meet every day and spend a third part of the day in ensuring that the regulations for perfect births are duly carried out. Their care is to be expressly extended to the future mothers, for the period of a child's life before birth is equally decisive, and the young wife must be carefully tended, kept from excessive pleasures or pains, and be encouraged to cultivate habits of gentleness, benevolence, and kindness.

Then comes the proper management of infants, and Plato is very convinced of the importance of constant motion for the young child, who in a Greek household was often closely bandaged in swaddling clothes and left to its own resources. He anticipates Aristippus, who, holding that pleasure was the chief end of life, found the best definition of pleasure to be 'a gentle motion,' and he is prepared to make his ideal state for infants at least a pleasant one.

The first principle in relation both to the body and soul of very young children is that nursing and moving about by day and night is good for them all, and that

the younger they are the more they will need it. Infants should live, if it were possible, as if they were always rocking at sea. Exercise and motion in the earliest years greatly contribute to create a part of virtue in the soul: the child's virtue is cheerfulness, and good nursing makes a gentle and a cheerful child.

This first period will last till the age of three, when the child will begin to find out its own natural modes of amusement in company with other children: from three to six, boys and girls should live and play together: after six they should separate, and begin to receive instruction.

On the subject of co-education, which may be regarded as the best practical solution for the cure of sex-ignorance, Plato speaks with a rather uncertain voice. His general theory presupposes an identity of training, and the free mingling of boys and girls, young men and women, in sport and work. But he is disturbed by his conviction of the natural badness of boys contrasted with girls:

> Of all animals, the boy is the most unmanageable, inasmuch as he has the fountain of reason in him not yet regulated; he is the most insidious, sharp-witted, and insubordinate of creatures; therefore he must be bound with many bridles.

The further difficulty, that constant friendly intercourse between young men and women may lead to undesirable results is discussed at some length in the *Laws*, p. 835, and the very sensible conclusion is

arrived at that a healthy public opinion will be the first result of these natural conditions of comradeship, and that the general sentiment will be the strongest of checks upon undue licence. The importance of example in education and morals is rightly insisted upon :

> The best way of training the young is to train yourself at the same time : not to admonish them, but to be always carrying out your own admonitions in practice.

Finally, education is of supreme importance to a country :

> The minister of education is the most important officer of State ; of all appointments his is the greatest ; he will rule according to law, must be fifty years old, and have children of his own, both boys and girls by preference, at any rate one or the other.

These are some of the salient points of Plato's teaching, but a careful reading of the *Republic* and the *Laws* will reveal many further issues and many side-lights on the main thesis. Plato does not trouble to be rigorously consistent, and, like Euripides, he does not hesitate at times to play the part of the candid friend, and to point out what he thinks are the natural weaknesses of the female sex. Sometimes he is right, sometimes he is wrong. 'Women,' he says, 'are too prone to secrecy and stealth ; they are accustomed to creep into dark places and resist being dragged into the light.'

Here Plato seems to hit the truth. If there is one quality—call it virtue or vice, as you will—which is peculiarly a woman's and not a man's characteristic, it is secretiveness. The result of many centuries of self-suppression, it gives a certain aggravating charm to the female mind, and usually does no particular harm. But it is, perhaps, the chief reason of women's comparative failure in literature. Sincerity in writing is the saving grace, and if a book is not frank, it should never be written. Few women authors resemble Sappho, or Jane Austen, or Mme. Colette in contemporary French literature, who, unlike though they are in the circumstances of their lives, do all make a serious attempt at truth. Most women fail in frankness towards themselves and their readers. George Eliot, Ouida, George Sand (to take another typical and strongly differentiated trio) dissemble their facts as much as they dissemble their names. Like ostriches, they hide their faces under a cloud of words.

XII.—The Attic Orators

To turn from Plato's ideal State to the actual condition of woman's life during the fourth century in Athens, as we have it revealed in the pages of the orators, is like passing from a breezy hillsid into a dark, close-shut room. We see the working of the harem system, with all its atmosphere of secrecy and suspicion. The women are closely watched; for it is presumed that they will be unfaithful to their husbands if they can: they live secluded in the women's quarter of the house—the gynæconitis—and for any strange man to enter their rooms is a grave impropriety. In Demosthenes, for example, we find it imputed to Androtion, as a proof of unbearable insolence, that in his capacity of tax-collector he forced his way into the women's apartments, and compelled the master of the house to hide under the bed, putting him thus to shame before his womankind. That a wife should appear publicly with her husband at a dinner party, and take a share in men's pleasures, is equally an offence against morality. Neæra was known to have sat at dinner with her husband and

his friends, and this fact, testified by witnesses, is taken as an obvious proof that she was a woman of abandoned character. The sister of Nicodemus, Isæus argues, could not have been legally married, for she was often seen at entertainments with the man she called her husband, and 'wedded wives do not go out to dinner with their husbands, or expect to join in festivities.'

The doctrine that a wife is her husband's property is applied to the fullest extent, and any offence against that property is punished with the utmost rigour of the law. A husband who finds another man in his harem is allowed to put him to death. At Athens there is no pretence of 'the sanctity of marriage': the offence and the punishment is the same whether the intrigue is with the master's wife or with his concubine: each is equally the master's property, to be protected at any cost. It is a more heinous crime to make love to a woman who belongs to another man than to offer her violence; for the offence is viewed solely from the owner's side, and a woman who willingly yields to another is outraging her lawful master's *amour propre* more deeply than if she were taken by force. The lover is put to death; the ravisher pays a fine: the point of view being much the same as used to hold in English law, where the wife-beater was regarded as a less offensive character than the poacher.

But if the husband of an erring wife had the support of the law, however violent his methods of revenge, the case was very different when the woman was the offended party. There is an anecdote in Plutarch's Life of Alcibiades which reveals the attitude of the Athenian lawgivers.

Hipparete made a prudent and affectionate wife;—but at last growing very uneasy at her husband's associating with such a number of courtesans, both strangers and Athenians, she quitted his house and went to her brother's. Alcibiades went on with his debaucheries, and gave himself no pain about his wife; but it was necessary for her, in order to obtain a legal separation, to give in a bill of divorce to the archon, and to appear personally with it; for the sending of it by another hand would not do. When she came to do this according to law, Alcibiades rushed in, caught her in his arms, and carried her through the market-place to his own house, no one presuming to oppose him, or to take her from him. From that time she remained with him until her death, which happened not long after, when Alcibiades was upon his voyage to Ephesus. Nor does the violence used in this case seem to be contrary to the laws either of society in general or of that republic in particular. For the law of Athens, in requiring her who wants to be divorced to appear publicly in person, probably intended to give the husband an opportunity to meet with her and to recover her.

Plutarch, 'Alcibiades,' Langhorne's Translation.

A wife seeking to escape from an unworthy husband, we see, is regarded in the same light as a slave seeking to escape from his owner, and all the resources

of the law are put at the disposal of the husband and the master. There was a constant tendency to think of women and slaves together; and the institution of slavery was certainly one of the most powerful agents in the degradation of women at Athens. A slave-girl was, in the eye of the law, a thing—not a human being, and she was free from all restraints of moral sanction. She was the property of her owner, and her only duty was to obey him in all things: virtue, chastity, modesty, were for her things impossible of attainment; and over the whole business was cast the protection and encouragement of the law. There came into existence a class of women condemned to physical and moral degradation—a class whose very existence was an insult to womankind; so that Aristophanes, at least, has the wit to see that the establishment of a female government would have as one of its first results the forcible abolition of all such recognised and legal forms of vice.

Women and slaves then were linked together; and it must be remembered, as Professor Murray says, that people do not become slaves by a legal process; they become slaves when they are brought into contact with superiors who have the power and the will to use them as tools. There are three principal tests of slavery, ancient or modern, and in ancient life they will often apply equally well to women.

Firstly, slaves are a degraded and immoral class. This was continually insisted upon; and doubtless one result was to produce, in a certain degree, the vices falsely imputed to nature.

Secondly, their work is despised, as unworthy of free men. The harder work was left in the hands of slaves or women, who did not receive any pay, and the super-abundant leisure of the male citizen was devoted to the political life.

Thirdly, the condition of dependence, once fully established, soon produces a feeling of despair. The willingness to die, which is so noticeable in Euripides' heroines, is one of the sure signs of slavery. Slaves are lacking in spirit; some, indeed, are so completely lacking that they are happy in servitude: the impetus to revolt must come from without, especially when the servile state has existed for many centuries.

Slavery may be defined as the economic exploitation of the weaker; and, though it does not exist in our time and land, it offers such a convenient basis for civilisation that various devices are used even now to take its place. There is the theory, for example, that some kinds of work are *higher* than others, and therefore should be paid on a higher scale. Or again, that the same work, if performed by different persons, requires different remuneration.

Many estimates of women's inferiority have ultimately an economic basis. The more lucrative

trades and professions are those for which it is considered that women are temperamentally unfit.

It is a noticeable fact that all these general conceptions of women's weakness have always been closely connected with their legal status. In Athens, where women could not hold property, and an heiress was taken over by the nearest male relative as a necessary encumbrance on the estate, the estimate of woman's character was very low. In Alexandria and at Rome, where women by various devices outwitted the law and became possessed of some degree of economic independence, their moral position also changed for the better. In England feminism begins with the Married Women's Property Act.

But as long as slavery, social or economic, is not recognised by the law, it cannot be the curse that it was to ancient life. In Athens it was a legal institution, owing its validity to much the same mode of thought as made the wife also her husband's chattel. It is the business of lawyers to defend the law, and, if the law is bad, their moral sense is necessarily warped in the process; so that it is not surprising if the private speeches of the Attic orators, although they exhibit the natural subtlety of the Athenians in a striking light, by no means give an equally strong impression of moral rectitude. All the orators are the same in this respect. Demosthenes

in matters of State was a high-minded patriot; as a lawyer he is, like the rest of his colleagues, a professional liar, and does not scruple to falsify and misrepresent the truth. Lysias so forgets the man in the advocate that he seems to reserve his highest powers for his worst cases, and obviously delights in such a client as the shameless old cripple for whom he writes his most ingenious speech. Isæus has no regard for veracity, and it has been found by painful experience that his unsupported statements, even on simple questions of fact, are, to put it mildly, extremely unreliable. As for Hyperides, he is careless of shame so long as he wins his case; and his gesture, as he bids his fair client display her charms, is like the calculated boldness of the slave-dealer offering his girls to the highest bidder.

But if the orators give us an impression of cunning subtlety which far transcends the bounds that we even now allow to lawyers, their clients are in no better case. By the middle of the fourth century Athens was in full decadence. Her men had lost all the vigour and courage that brought their country safe through the dangers of the Persian Wars: her women, perhaps, were even worse than the men—*corruptio optimi pessima*—and had sunk into a state of utter degradation.

Impotent old men and designing young women are the chief figures in most of Isæus' speeches; and,

as his editor says, to have any confidence in the veracity or virtue of his clients argues a truly Arcadian simplicity. There is the case of Euctemon, for example—the old man who divorces his wife and leaves his children, to live with his slave-woman, Alce. This unfortunate, whose youth has been degraded for her master's profit, has her revenge when the old man grows senile. She induces him to remove her from the den of infamy which has been one of the sources of his wealth, to live with her in the drinking-shop over which she is put in charge, and finally to recognise one of her bastards as his own son. The family, threatened by a second marriage, reluctantly consent to help in an adoption which ran counter to the first principles of Attic law; and it is not until the old man's death, when his property falls into dispute, that his 'misfortunes' with the woman (so the advocate euphemistically describes them) come to light. The facts of the case are utterly sordid; but every detail is enveloped by Isæus in a cloud of sophistical arguments which show both a complete absence of moral sense in the advocate and so great a faculty of deception that modern writers have inferred—it need not be said with how little reason—that polygamy was not illegal at Athens, that concubinage was recognised by law, and that bastards had the rights of legitimate children. All three statements are untrue; but

they may fairly be deduced from the ever-shifting arguments that the lawyer uses. In another of his cases it is an old man at death's door who marries a young girl, and the usual imputations upon the bride's motives form one of his strongest arguments. In a third, the estate of Pyrrhus, a woman of notoriously bad life is foisted by her brother upon one of her old lovers, and the claim is then made that she is his legal wife.

But to go through the details of Isæus' cases would be merely tedious. In all of them we see that moral degradation and absence of social rectitude which was the natural result of the inferiority of women in the eyes of the Attic law. Women, like children, cannot legally enter into a contract, even if it is only to purchase a bushel of corn; the son of a brother has a stronger claim to an intestate property than the son of a daughter, for the law says, 'males must prevail'; a daughter cannot inherit in her own person; she is only an intermediary by whom the estate is transmitted through marriage to a male of the same blood as her father. A woman's disabilities are painfully plain in Isæus: as for her legal rights, it is hard to discover from his speeches how far they have any actual existence. The orator, at least, when his male clients seem to have the law against them, does not hesitate to appeal to the natural sympathies of

the male jurymen; and in the tenth oration we see how shamefully an heiress, in spite of the law's formal protection, could be despoiled by her guardian and her brother.

It is generally assumed that this male superiority before the law had a religious sanction, the necessity of keeping up the family worship, which could only be done by a man. If we were speaking of a primitive society the argument would have some force, but the Athenians of the fourth century were at the end rather than the beginning of their national life: religion was dead, and the foundations of morality undermined; only the law remained unaltered, that women were the inferior sex. How far women contributed themselves to their degradation may be studied in all the orators' speeches, but two cases are especially significant: Antiphon's murder speech 'Against the stepmother,' and Lysias' 'Defence for the murder of Eratosthenes.'

The first is grimly horrible in its sordid realism; as Antiphon says, it is the story of Clytemnestra repeated, but divested now of all its tragic romance. Two women are the chief characters: one a free-born Athenian, the wife of the murdered man; the other a slave, the mistress of the man's friend, one Philoneos. The facts are these: Philoneos gets tired of his mistress' devotion, and determines to rid himself of her by the simple process of selling her into a

life of utter degradation. He reveals his intention to his friend, and the two men decide to have one last carouse, the girl waiting upon them, before she goes to her ruin. But the man's wife, who has found her husband as false to her as Philoneos is to his lover, intervenes. She makes the acquaintance of the slave-girl, who is still passionately devoted to her worthless master, and persuades her to regain his affection by a love-potion which she will provide. The girl agrees, and when the two men meet at dinner she pours the potion (which, unknown to her, is a deadly poison) into their cups, giving the larger share to her own false lord. Philoneos falls dead immediately; the other man collapses, and dies some days afterwards. The slave-girl is taken and broken on the wheel; the wife is in this speech accused by her stepson of her share in the crime.

Antiphon's pleadings throw a lurid light on the relations between men and women in a slave State; the speech of Lysias in defence of Eratosthenes' murder is an even more invaluable document. The orator's client is accused of murder, and relies for his defence on the plea that his victim was taken in adultery, and therefore lawfully put to death. The law, at Athens a written, not an unwritten code, is definitely on the accused man's side; but it is curious that this is the only surviving speech in which it is pleaded as an excuse. It seems, indeed, that even

the Athenians hesitated to use the ferocious power that the law gave them; and we may imagine, if we will, that this was a test case, brought, perhaps, by one of the Socratic circle, to try the validity of the law in the face of the new feminist doctrines. In any event, the Ionian Lysias, whose honeyed pen was at the service of the highest bidder, was a person thoroughly distasteful to Plato and his friends, and it is probable that in this speech he had the satisfaction both of defending the established order of social morality, and also of striking a shrewd blow at his personal enemies. The speech, which is a model of art, begins with some compliments to the jury, and then Lysias, very ingeniously, makes his client tell the simple story of his life.

When I decided to marry, gentlemen, and brought a wife into my house, I made this my rule of behaviour. I did not annoy her with excessive vigilance, but on the other hand, I did not leave her too much her own mistress to do whatever she pleased. I kept as close a guard over her as was possible, and took all reasonable care.

(This to conciliate the jury and to show that the damage done was not due to any lack of precautions on the owner's side.)

After a time a child was born and then I began to feel confidence, and handed over to her the charge of all my goods, thinking that this was the surest bond of union between us. At first, gentlemen, she was the

best of women, a clever housewife and a thrifty, exact in all her management. Then my mother died, and her death has been the cause of all my troubles. My wife went to her funeral; that fellow saw her walking in the funeral procession, and after a time succeeded in corrupting her.

(The jury are meant to draw the inference that women should never leave the house: one appearance in public may mean ruin.)

He watched my wife's maid who goes to do the marketing, made a proposal to her, and soon effected his purpose of seduction. I must tell you, gentlemen, that my humble home is built in two storeys, the upper part similar in style to the ground floor, one containing the women's apartments, the other the men's rooms. Now when our baby was born, the mother began by nursing it herself, and to avoid any risk of her coming down stairs at bath-time, I took up my quarters in the upper rooms, and the women came down to the ground floor. Moreover, we soon got into the way of my wife leaving me to go and sleep with the baby downstairs, so that she might give him the breast and prevent him crying.

(It is, of course, essential that the master's rest at night should not be disturbed, and the jury will agree that this was a legitimate reason for a wife's absence from her proper place.)

This went on for a long time and I never suspected anything. Such an arrant simpleton was I that I thought *my* wife the most virtuous woman in Athens. Well, gentlemen, time passed away, and one day I came back home unexpectedly from the country,