

33. 'My wife and I are one, and I am he':  
The laws and rituals of marriage

Women embarked on marriage in a welter of prescriptive contradiction. Told in song and ceremony that they were entering a heaven in which they might expect worship, power, and adoration, women in all three countries were consigned through marriage to a civil purgatory, an indeterminate status in which they were virtual non-persons in the law. Barred from making contracts, bearing witness in court, and initiating lawsuits, they could nevertheless be prosecuted for most criminal offenses. Meanwhile, the religious and public pronouncements on their proper role as wives were often totally at odds: religion, notably Catholicism, counseled them to place God and children before their husbands, but the secular advice literature was unrelenting in the demand that conjugal love come first.

The contrasts between the sweetness of songs and ceremonies and the harshness of the legal and economic realities of marriage are clearly revealed in the following pastiche. The first four selections from France expose the contradictions between civil law and the new secular morality on the one hand and the Catholic vision of marriage on the other. The French Civil Code, promulgated by Napoléon in 1804, decreed that the married woman was subordinate to her husband; in contrast the author Marie-Catherine-Sophie de Flavigny, comtesse d'Agoult (1805-76), better known under the pseudonym Daniel Stern, recalls how her Catholic confessor taught her to put religion and children before her marital relationship. However different the voices of the pious aristocrat Louise-Mathilde de Montesquiou-Fezensac, comtesse de Flavigny (d. 1883), and the liberal dramatist Ernest Legouvé (1807-1903), they shared a vision of the married woman as self-sacrifice incarnate.

The two selections from England highlight the blatant discrepancies between the language of the traditional marriage ceremony of the Anglican Church and the actuality of women's position in civil law. An Englishwoman marrying according to 'The Book of Common Prayer' would hear her husband

SOURCES: (i) Henry Cachard, *The French Civil Code, with the various amendments thereto, as in force on March 15, 1895*, articles 212-17, 220, pp. 59-60. (ii) Marie de Flavigny, comtesse d'Agoult [pseud. Daniel Stern], *Mes Souvenirs, 1806-1833* (Paris, 1877), pp. 213, 215. (iii) Louise-Mathilde de Montesquiou-Fezensac, comtesse de Flavigny, *Recueil de prières, de méditations, et de lectures* (Paris, 1861), as quoted by Nicole Bothorel et al. "La Femme au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle," in Pierre Grimal, ed., *Histoire mondiale de la femme* (Paris, 1968), 3: 110. (iv) Ernest Legouvé, *Histoire morale des femmes*, 7th ed. (Paris, 1882), pp. 358-59. Originally published in 1848. (v) *The Book of Common Prayer* (London, 1903), p. 243. (vi) Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon, *A Brief Summary in Plain Language of the Most Important Laws Concerning Women; Together with a Few Observations Thereon* (London, 1854), p. 6. (vii) Jonathan Stearns, *Female Influence, and the True Christian Mode of Its Exercise: A Discourse Delivered in the First Presbyterian Church in Newburyport, July 30, 1837* (Newburyport, Mass., 1837), pp. 23-24. (viii) *History of Woman Suffrage*, ed. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joselyn Gage (New York, 1881), 1: 70-71. (ix) *The Ameri-*

pledge her all his worldly goods; yet as the reformer Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon (1827-91) indignantly reported, at marriage all of a woman's belongings—not only her clothes and jewels, but her body as well—became her husband's property.

Across the Atlantic the Presbyterian minister Jonathan Stearns (1808-89) warns women to stay in their place, reminding them that the stability of the nation depends on female delicacy and piety. The feminist reformers who gathered at Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848, however, questioned how much power could be exercised by a woman who was, in fact, civilly dead. The marriage of Harriet Jones, a former Texas slave, shows that no matter how joyous a plantation wedding might be, the freed slave woman, like the New England lady, promised obedience to her husband. The final selection, "Oh, Promise Me," a song by Clement Scott (1841-1904) that Americans began to hear at weddings in the late nineteenth century, equated marriage with paradise. Victorian women might well have complained that they had entered marriage believing in this beatific vision only to be rudely surprised.

### (i) The French Civil Code

#### *Of the Respective Rights and Duties of Husband and Wife*

Husband and wife owe each other fidelity, support, and assistance.

A husband owes protection to his wife; a wife obedience to her husband.

A wife is bound to live with her husband and to follow him wherever he deems proper to reside. The husband is bound to receive her, and to supply her with whatever is necessary for the wants of life, according to his means and condition.

A wife cannot sue in court without the consent of her husband, even if she is a public tradeswoman or if there is no community or she is separated as to property.

The husband's consent is not necessary when the wife is prosecuted criminally or in a police matter.

A wife, even when there is no community, or when she is separated as to property, cannot give, convey, mortgage, or acquire property, with or without consideration, without the husband joining in the instrument or giving his written consent.

A wife may, if she is a public tradeswoman, bind herself without the husband's consent with respect to what relates to her trade, and in that case she also binds her husband if there is community of property between them. She is not considered a public tradeswoman if she merely retails the goods of her husband's business, but only when she has a separate business.

*can Slave: A Composite Autobiography*, ed. George P. Rawick, 4: *Texas Narratives* (Westport, Conn., 1972), part 2: 235-36. (x) Clement Scott, "Oh, Promise Me," in *Old Favorite Songs and Hymns*, ed. Richard Charlton Mackenzie (New York, n.d.), pp. 5-6. The title of this document is an informal nineteenth-century version of the English jurist Blackstone's formulation of the common law on marriage.

### (ii) Marie de Flavigny, comtesse d'Agoult (Daniel Stern)

The young girl does not love, as she certainly knows, but she will love, her mother tells her; a well-born young girl always loves the man she marries; this is also the advice of her confessor. And then children will come, the true love of woman. . . . For the Catholic priest, marriage is nothing more, according to its definition in the catechism, than a sacrament destined to give children "to the Church," love being nothing but the passions of the flesh. The person of the husband, as the priest conceives it, is only of trifling importance; one does not inquire in the confessional if the fiancé is pleasant; and the bizarre thing is that one does not even worry much about his beliefs and his morals! He is desired by the family, that is sufficient. If he is a good Catholic, so much the better; if he is not—"Clotilda converted Clovis"\*—and everything is said.

### (iii) Louise-Mathilde de Montesquiou-Fezensac, comtesse de Flavigny

Lord, it is You who have given me,  
In the husband with whom you have united me,  
A guide for my inexperience,  
A protector for my weakness—  
Grant that, after the pleasure of pleasing you,  
The attachment to my husband,  
The care of making him happy  
Will occupy me completely  
Grant that by the abnegation of my will,  
And deference to his least desires,  
I will make his life agreeable and sweet.

### (iv) Ernest Legouvé

Marriage alone can give to this feminine influence a character of continuity and of purity. . . . To live for another, to disappear in a glory or a virtue of which she is the principle, to dispense benefits while concealing the benefactress, to learn so that another may know, to think so that another may speak, to seek the light so that another may shine, there is no more beautiful destiny for woman, for all of this signifies devotion. And what more noble profession than that of devotion? What employment for life is more appropriate to all the qualities of woman? . . . Every wife who is truly a wife has for a career the career of her husband.

### (v) 'The Book of Common Prayer'

Then shall they again loose their hands; and the Man shall give unto the Woman a Ring, laying the same upon the book with the accustomed duty to

\* Clovis was a Frankish king of the fifth century whose wife, Clotilda, was reputed to have converted him to Christianity.—EDS.

the Priest and Clerk. And the Priest, taking the Ring, shall deliver it unto the Man, to put it upon the fourth finger of the Woman's left hand. And the Man holding the Ring there, and taught by the Priest, shall say, "With this Ring I thee wed, with my body I thee worship, and with all my worldly goods I thee endow: In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

(vi) Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon

A man and wife are one person in law; the wife loses all her rights as a single woman, and her existence is entirely absorbed in that of her husband. He is civilly responsible for her acts; she lives under his protection or cover, and her condition is called coverture.

A woman's body belongs to her husband; she is in his custody, and he can enforce his right by a writ of *habeas corpus*.

What was her personal property before marriage, such as money in hand, money at the bank, jewels, household goods, clothes, etc., becomes absolutely her husband's, and he may assign or dispose of them at his pleasure whether he and his wife live together or not. . . .

The legal custody of children belongs to the father. During the life-time of a sane father, the mother has no rights over her children, except a limited power over infants, and the father may take them from her and dispose of them as he thinks fit.

~~left—I will write you a long letter very soon—for this time receive this hasty scrawl, with a heart full of love from~~

~~Your loving wife,  
Your own Ellen~~

35. A Parisian working woman tells about her marriage:  
Suzanne Voilquin

Young working-class women encountered formidable obstacles—from venereal disease to economic insecurity—in pursuing the dream of domestic bliss, as these passages from the autobiography of Suzanne Monnier Voilquin reveal. Suzanne Monnier (c. 1800–1860) was the child of skilled artisans who had moved to Paris during the French Revolution. Raised at home by her mother, a devout Catholic, she learned to read and write at a convent school and was then apprenticed out to learn needlework. At the age of ten she was given full responsibility for raising her little sister, Adrienne. When her mother died and her father abandoned his family, Monnier was left to support herself and Adrienne by working as a seamstress and embroideress. Following her sister's marriage to a young printer and her own rape and abandonment by a medical student, Monnier set out to fashion a life for herself. In 1825 she married Eugène Voilquin, a construction worker. After eight unhappy years of marriage, the Voilquins, influenced by their involvement with the Saint-Simonians (a quasi-religious cult whose plans for social reform included ending the subjection of women), decided to separate; Suzanne later became a midwife. The following selection describes in unusually explicit fashion her marriage and its disappointments.

Marriage, without the possibility of divorce, has serious consequences even when this indissoluble bond is formed with love by a naïve and pure young girl. But for me, whose blighted heart was capable only of maternal feelings, there were cruel battles to be fought within myself before I dared unite with the man whose name I would loyally bear.

I met Voilquin in a society of modest bourgeois and respectable workers to which my brother-in-law belonged. . . . We danced; the young poets of the group recited their poems; they drank to the health of the ladies; and so forth. Voilquin was one of the more handsome of the group. He composed gallant songs; his wit was inexhaustible; he made one dizzy with his liveliness and gaiety; his open, lively countenance predisposed people to like him. Before we appeared on the scene, all the young ladies of the society had flirted with him, but, as often happens in such circumstances, it was I, who care so little

SOURCE: Madame Suzanne V. . . . [Voilquin], *Souvenirs d'une fille du peuple, ou la Saint-Simoniennne en Egypte*, 1834 à 1836 (Paris, 1866), pp. 66–74. The editors wish to thank Elizabeth G. Altman, Cambridge, Mass., for giving us her unpublished annotated translation of this work.

for attracting men, whom he noticed the most. As soon as Mallard had introduced us to the group, Voilquin struck up an acquaintance with my sister and brother-in-law, putting all his efforts into making a favorable impression on them. He succeeded, for after a short time my brother-in-law was singing his praises to me.

"The bearing and openness of this young man please me," he would tell me. "I believe he is a good, if somewhat frivolous, person. He is educated and comes from a respectable family. What more could you wish for? It would be sad to remain an old maid. Believe me, my sister, marry him and you will bring about Adrienne's delightful plan of the four of us forming together the jolliest and happiest group in creation. We have decided that we four should live together. Consent to this marriage, and we will at once begin looking for a lodging for the three of us to live in until the great event takes place."

For two and a half years my heart had thrilled only to the dreams of those little rosy angels that motherhood promised me. I thought that the only possible happiness would be to have children and to give them the overwhelming love that I held within me, and that made my life such a torment. I thought of it incessantly, but I wanted to surround the darling little creatures with every possible condition for happiness. To do this, I would have to give them a name and a father who recognized them as his own. From this standpoint I felt no reluctance in taking this self-confident and good young man as a husband. To compensate for the love I was unable to give him, couldn't I, I asked myself, enrich his life and make him happy by my constant devoted attention? He needed affectionate support because he had an inconsistent character that lacked a firm foundation, and this made him susceptible to every influence. The somewhat maternal feeling that I felt for him would remove all harmful obstacles from his path and give full rein to his good instincts. . . .

Thus, freely but without love, I accepted the offer of his hand and name. [But] my anxieties increased as the moment for our union approached. Should I tell my fiancé of my sorrows and past disappointments? Honesty advised me to confess everything, but prudence warned me to say nothing. Since it was Voilquin's nature to be expansive and outgoing it seemed to me that he would be unable to hear such a secret without divulging some part of it, thus exposing me to shame before my sister and brother-in-law. I would have preferred breaking off everything with him to that. I often thought of doing so, but that would have meant giving up the joy of becoming a mother. This hope alone could revive my soul. What should I do? Time passed while I hesitated indecisively. The banns were posted at Saint-Merry's and the day of the marriage was set. . . .

In the midst of these perplexities I turned to Father Lerat. I told myself that I would do whatever this kind, old priest advised me to do. Unfortunately, because of my long despondency, I had not seen him for two and a half years, but he nevertheless recognized me. I told him of our approaching marriage, and he at once asked me about my spiritual state. He asked if my thoughts were still occupied with the man who had caused me so much suffering.

"Oh no, my Father," I replied. "I have not thought of him since that time. Not only have I heard nothing more about him, but I never want to see him again." "Well, my child, get up from your knees. Your tears have purified you. Become a Christian wife and a good mother to your family. May God bless you, my dear daughter, as I bless you." Then he added as I withdrew, "Send your future husband to me. I will chat with him, and then give him the certificates of confession needed for your marriage." . . . Despite the continuing murmurs of my conscience, I resolved to remain silent. The marriage took place.

For every young girl marrying under her mother's protective shield, the wedding day is a day full of troubled mysteries and charm, but it was for me, abandoned as I was, a day of anguish that increased to an indescribable point. As soon as our friends had left us, and we were finally alone together in the intimacy I so much dreaded, the ghost of the past appeared again. Under this pressure I would perhaps have betrayed my secret in a burst of honest candor had I not been seized by such a powerful feeling of suffocation that I lost consciousness. I don't know how long it lasted. When I came to I was touched by the attentions Voilquin lavished on me and by his intense emotion. I realized that it was too late to trouble his peace of mind. And again I swore to myself to compensate for the unconfessed wrong by consecrating myself to his happiness.

Several days later another intimate drama passed between us, a drama in which I was called upon to begin my role of self-abnegation and consolation all at once. Alas, it had fatal consequences for me, for it ruined the chance of happiness I had counted on from the union—the hope of becoming a mother. . . . A few days after our marriage, when I complained of various symptoms, I noticed that Voilquin questioned me intensely. My answers clearly troubled him. A few moments later he pretended to have some business to attend to and left immediately. He didn't return until late in the evening. When we retired to our room, without showing how upset I was, I pressed him with questions. Instead of receiving a reply I saw him turn pale, begin to tremble, become nervously agitated, stiffen with tension, and finally lose consciousness. This was so unexpected that it forewarned me of the seriousness of the problem, but my compassion for his state prevailed over all other considerations. While trying to revive him I told myself that such a good and loyal person as he could only respond with such powerful feelings to a wrong that was involuntary on his part. When he regained consciousness I spoke only words of tenderness and encouragement. He confessed to me that an inexperienced doctor had declared him to be cured of a serious illness for several months, but unfortunately he was not yet cured.\* This morning, after our conversation, he had gone to consult another doctor who had given him proof that he was not over it. This certainty had nearly driven him mad, and he had hoped to calm himself by spending the entire day in the country. I finally came to accept everything, and this shared unhappiness served to bind us closer together. . . .

\* Voilquin had a venereal disease.—EDS.

In my long practice of medicine [i.e. as a midwife] I have many times had to record the sad effects of either inexcusable thoughtlessness or lack of respect for a wife—for her beauty and, especially, for her role as mother. How many women and children whose health has been forever destroyed have finally died of this cause! . . .

As for me, in the first five years of my marriage I had to abandon the hope of becoming a mother because of it. Three times I felt a dear tiny being moving about in my womb only to die there before having seen the light of day. How many tears I shed in the silence of the nights as I saw my hopes disappointed again and again. Oh, to have felt near my heart this young life that I bore with so much love perish without my having heard that so-long-desired first cry. Believe me, you would have had to experience these sorrows to appreciate all their bitterness. Words are powerless to express to you the lassitude and disgust for life that each of these crises left deep in my heart. I even came to doubt divine justice. "Must I accept the ruin of my health," I asked myself, "the even more terrible loss of my child as expiations for a sin against society's laws and not against divine indulgence? If God is just, why these new sufferings? Wasn't I recently wronged in a cowardly way? Did I not cry and pray enough? If I was at fault, haven't I redeemed myself by work, courage, and devotion? Oh, sacred maternity, my beloved ideal! Why have you always eluded me? What can I cling to? This marriage to which I have given so much of my life, and from which I have received so little happiness in return, is it not to be blessed?" During such moments of discouragement or during the nights I was unable to sleep, I began to regret the loss of my Catholic faith. I told myself that if I still had the strong faith that had sustained my mother in her laborious and painful life, then perhaps I, like her, would be more resigned. But now that was no longer possible, and there was nothing left in me to control the internal flame that was destroying me.

### 36. An adulteress confesses to Honoré de Balzac: Louise Abber

Louise Abber was the pseudonym of an unknown woman of the wealthy Parisian bourgeoisie who in 1835 and 1836 wrote several confessional letters to the novelist Honoré de Balzac. Her first letter described her sheltered girlhood and the deep impression the sight of Napoleon and the great classical painter David made on her as a young girl. Had she been a man, she wrote Balzac, she would have become a soldier or an artist. She became instead a respectable wife, the mother of two children, and, after fifteen years of marriage, an adulteress. The letter from which this selection was taken chronicles the mixture of joy and guilt this nineteenth-century woman experienced in breaking her marriage vows; it also evinces the mannered self-importance of the Romantic generation. Abber clearly believed that her personal situation

SOURCE: *Lettres de femmes adressées à Honoré de Balzac. Première série* (1832-36), *Cahiers Balzaciens* (Paris, 1924), 3: 43-46.

was significant. This little drama of illicit sex was, for her, a historical event that she supposed would intrigue a great literary genius as a topic for a future novel. And in fact she was not wrong in this supposition, for adultery was a favorite theme of nineteenth-century writers.

A woman endowed with soul, heart, imagination, and the love of virtue, but also passionate, quixotic, and full of energy, was married to a man who did not love her. For fifteen years she suffered all the *frightful consequences* that a big city can impose on the unfortunate wife of a husband whose passions are excessively intense and all too physical.

(This woman owes it to the truth to state here that she alone in all the world suffered from her husband's life. He was considered delightful by everyone but her—but the passions!)

She remained pure, even in her thoughts, despite the efforts of several men, all of whom wanted to be something in her life. This woman is not at all pretty, she can circulate in a *salon* without being noticed; yet from the time she was thirteen years old, the men admitted to her circle of acquaintances loved her; she was never able to figure out why, but nothing could be more true. Until that time, she had only understood of love what she had read about it, and her severe glance always stopped the improper speeches that were addressed to her. Then a mysterious suffering took hold of her, she cried constantly, everything became dull and cold to her, an illness of the nerves and blood seized her, ennui and disgust with life came to weigh heavily on her heart and stop its beating. They said it was aneurism, poor people!

A man was then received at her home, his position admitted him to her intimate circle; he said he was unhappy, she pitied him, he said he was suffering, she suffered with his suffering, he loved her, she also loved him! A hundred times she wanted to break it off, said so, tried, but circumstances and her heart were both opposed. This frightful battle lasted two years!

It was the third of November last year—my God! she gave herself to him, without wanting to, without second thoughts, carried away by the agitation of her heart, her senses, by unknown new, strong, unbelievable sensations, and especially by the fear of seeing him kill himself or leave for a journey that would compromise his future and his life (ten years before she had almost been responsible for a bloody drama, the effects of which had darkened her entire life); she was afraid, she trembled; finally she forgot everything except for the love she felt for this man! She dishonored the respectable white hair of her father, she did not think of her thirteen-year-old daughter and her beautiful child of seven. In sum, she gave herself.

The hours that followed her error, ah! Monsieur, what pages to write! You understand so well—do I need to depict this desperate shame, mixed nonetheless with happiness, infinite happiness, for here it is my heart and my life that write, and they are expressing the utter truth.

For about six months my emotional life was tumultuous—despair, pleasures, tears, intoxication—but always accompanied by remorse that could not

be vanquished! She was jealous, she hid her jealousy; impetuous and violent, she became sweet and fearful, and brought nothing to this liaison but the most absolute truth, without coquetry.

Knowing nothing of this passion she had never experienced, she was visited by too many good feelings, good intentions—even when the criminal feelings continued—to break with him; separate from him, no, for he wanted always to be something in her life, but finally this man was no longer the same; his character, which she had so admired, gave way to hard demands, sweet attentions to irritation, sweet endearments to words that were hard, offensive; finally, two months ago, after two hours of unbearable heartache, she became delirious for almost a day, she opened the gate of the garden in which she happened to live at the time . . . the Seine rolled by below . . . she restrained herself only when the mother in her revealed to her the stain she would place on the lives of her two poor children! . . . A fever, followed by convulsions, brought all her family together around her; what reproaches could she not address to herself?

He learned from her the cause of her illness, he wore a repentant air, but it was only an air; enough, I could say so much more about it!

Today the disenchanted woman cries, bemoans her transgression, hopeless, inconsolable.

Ah! Please, Monsieur, write of the experience of a woman guilty of such an offense, clinging to the affection of her father who, knowing how difficult her experience as a wife has been, praises her, thanks her for living a life he believes to be pure, and to the respect of her family, which she merits so little; of her daughter's presence, a perpetual reproach; of the remorse that torments her like a cancer, all of which make her life horrible. I beg you, write of this dreadful situation. What does one do when one has reached this point?

### 37. Three medical views on female sexuality

Nineteenth-century sexual prescription and practice were far more complex than the prevalent contemporary stereotype of Victorian prudery and repression suggests. The marriage manual by Auguste Debay (1802–90) from which the first selection is taken was one of the best-selling books in nineteenth-century France, reprinted 172 times in forty years. An ex-army surgeon turned medical popularizer, Debay conveys the dominant French secular vision of regular sexual exercise as a normal and necessary component of private hygiene and public health. In contrast, William Acton (1813–75), a British ex-

SOURCES: (i) Auguste Debay, *Hygiène et physiologie du mariage*, 153d ed. (Paris, 1880), pp. 17–18, 92, 94–95, 105–9. Originally published in 1849. (ii) William Acton, M.R.C.S., *The Functions and Disorders of the Reproductive Organs*, 8th American ed. (Philadelphia, 1894), pp. 208–12. Originally published in London in 1857. (iii) Elizabeth Blackwell, "On the Abuses of Sex—II. Fornication," *Essays in Medical Sociology* (London, 1902), 1: 46–47, 51–58.

pert on venereal disease, presents in this famous passage the classically Victorian concept of female passionlessness. Despite their different opinions about female sexual capacities, however, Debay and Acton agree that wives should consent unselfishly to sexual intercourse for the sake of male health, family harmony, and social stability. The third selection is taken from the writings of Elizabeth Blackwell (1821–1910), who in 1849 gained the distinction of being the first woman to earn a medical degree in the United States. Blackwell's view of female sexuality, based on fifty years' experience as a practicing gynecologist and obstetrician both in America and in England, is very different from that of her male counterparts.

#### (i) Auguste Debay

Marriage is the only means to channel the genital instinct and to subject it to a moral purpose; it alone can regulate and moderate venereal appetites. We will see below that it is as dangerous to suppress the genital instinct as to give it free rein. The general law of harmony requires a moderate exercise of all the organs in our physical structures. If one of the organs is condemned to absolute repose, the other organs soon suffer, and since the perfect equilibrium of all functions has been destroyed, health is affected and illnesses follow. The genital act is, therefore, a necessity for man and for woman; its absolute privation can only be harmful to the physical and moral health of the individual. . . .

During coitus, the pleasure experienced by the woman is due in large part to the titillation of the clitoris; friction exercised on the erectile tissue of the vagina and the *labia minora* contribute to and increase the amount of pleasure. The voluptuous spasm is less violent in woman than in man; on the other hand it lasts longer. One encounters a few women who, at the slightest contact, become delirious with pleasure, but most require prolonged and repeated caressing in order to reach venereal spasm. The former are nervous women of ardent imagination; the latter are lymphatic women, fat and endowed with a less impressionable nervous system. . . .

From twenty to thirty years of age, a married man may exercise his rights two to four times a week, leaving an interval of a day between times. To exhaust oneself with coitus repeated five and six times a day, as many young people do, is to court trouble later on. *to much sex is bad*

From thirty to forty years, a man should limit himself to twice a week. From forty to fifty, once a week. . . . Continence is a necessity for those over sixty. . . .

The rules of health for women are almost the same as those listed above. . . . Although woman, by reason of the fact that her losses are less, can prolong the venereal act for a greater length of time than man and can repeat it more often, she should nevertheless be temperate in the pleasures of marriage, for such temperance will conserve the freshness of her charms, which would rapidly wither with excess. Solitary sensual pleasures, to which many women, discontented with their husbands, abandon themselves, are a dangerous proceeding that enervate women and predispose them to leukorrhœa. . . .

*normal discharge!*

*to much sex is bad*

A reasonable woman should always be contented with what her husband is able to do and should never demand more. Where an overly vigorous husband indulges too frequently in genital activity, it is the duty of a wise wife to use all the power she has over him to moderate his ardor, assuage his fires, and make him understand that venereal excesses are not only damaging to the conservation of his virile faculties, but even more deadly to children conceived in a state of exhaustion. . . .

The horizontal position, that is to say the man lying on the woman, is the natural and instinctive position for the union of the sexes in the human race. . . . The peculiar fancy that some wives occasionally experience to take the husband's place disturbs the natural order. . . .

Man loves to see his happiness shared; his sexual pleasures are increased by those experienced by woman, and when the frenzy of pleasure seizes her at the same time as it does him, it seems that life itself escapes from him and is extinguished in the midst of the sweetest sensuality. . . .

If one occasionally finds women who are too amorous, there are many more who sin by the contrary excess and introduce indifference and frigidity into the execution of their conjugal duty to cool off the husband, who is sometimes privately offended by this. When this happens over and over again, he may go to seek the sexual desire he is unable to find in his wife in the arms of a mistress. From that comes estrangement, desertion, reproaches, griefs, hard words, and all the disorders that follow.

It is true that man is brutal. Without bothering himself about the mental and physical state of his wife, he insists, he demands that she grant him what he desires. A refusal can provoke his bad temper and sometimes a tempest!

O wives! Follow this advice. Submit to the demands of your husband in order to attach him to you all the more. Despite the momentary aversion for the pleasures he seeks, force yourself to satisfy him, put on an act and simulate the spasm of pleasure; this innocent trickery is permitted when it is a question of keeping a husband. Believe me, grant with good grace and without hesitation that which would be demanded by force. You well know, alas! that man, seized by desires, is impetuous, sometimes brutal. Have the good sense to drown in your caresses the ardor of this genital fever; this is the only means to rid yourself of his importunities.

O wives! Follow my advice. It will assure you of peace and perhaps even happiness in marriage.

You husbands who wish to keep the respect of your wife, be for your part less despotic in your desires. Before demanding as the master what your appetites desire, bill and coo like a lover. Inquire into her physical state, her mood; respect her unpropitious days; do not trouble her with your desires in those moments of nervous irritation when the soul is sad and the senses are little disposed to pleasure. When you see indifference and repulsion, be wise enough to wait until later. Never take roughly and by force what is refused you; for be on guard! the woman, irritated, may go to seek in the arms of a lover what she does not find with her husband. Think about it, gentlemen; this point deserves your complete attention.

Always be pleasant around your wives; induce the awakening of their sleeping senses by sweetness and tenderness; begin by enchanting their ears with the harmonious notes of the language of love; employ stimulations to the soul and body at the same time, and when your caresses and your delicious preludes have dissipated indifference and inflamed their desires, oh! then you will no longer need to complain of coldness.

### (ii) William Acton

We have already mentioned lack of sexual feeling in the female as not an uncommon cause of apparent or temporary impotence in the male. There is so much ignorance on the subject, and so many false ideas are current as to women's sexual condition, and are so productive of mischief, that I need offer no apology for giving here a plain statement that most medical men will corroborate.

I have taken pains to obtain and compare abundant evidence on this subject, and the result of my inquiries I may briefly epitomise as follows:— I should say that the majority of women (happily for society) are not very much troubled with sexual feeling of any kind. What men are habitually, women are only exceptionally. It is too true, I admit, as the Divorce Court shows, that there are some few women who have sexual desires so strong that they surpass those of men, and shock public feeling by their consequences. I admit, of course, the existence of sexual excitement terminating even in nymphomania,\* a form of insanity that those accustomed to visit lunatic asylums must be fully conversant with; but, with these sad exceptions, there can be no doubt that sexual feeling in the female is in the majority of cases in abeyance, and that it requires positive and considerable excitement to be roused at all; and even if roused (which in many instances it never can be) it is very moderate compared with that of the male. Many persons, and particularly young men, form their ideas of women's sensuous feeling from what they notice early in life among loose or, at least, low and immoral women. There is always a certain number of females who, though not ostensibly in the ranks of prostitutes, make a kind of a trade of a pretty face. They are fond of admiration, they like to attract the attention of those immediately above them. Any susceptible boy is easily led to believe, whether he is altogether overcome by the siren or not, that she, and therefore all women, must have at least as strong passions as himself. Such women, however, give a very false idea of the condition of female sexual feeling in general. Association with the loose women

\* I shall probably have no other opportunity of noticing that, as excision of the clitoris has been recommended for the cure of this complaint, Köbel't thinks that it would not be necessary to remove the whole of the clitoris in nymphomania, the same results (that is destruction of venereal desire) would follow if the glans clitoridis had been alone removed, as it is now considered that it is the glans alone in which the sensitive nerves expand. This view I do not agree with, as I have already stated with regard to the analogous structure of the penis. . . . I am fully convinced that in many women there is no special sexual sensation in the clitoris, and I am as positive that the special sensibility dependent on the erectile tissue exists in several portions of the vaginal canal.

Wives have conjugal duty over husbands

Misogyny

husband will leave you!

but

→ where penis goes



of the London streets in casinos and other immoral haunts (who, if they have not sexual feeling, counterfeit it so well that the novice does not suspect but that it is genuine), seems to corroborate such an impression, and as I have stated above, it is from these erroneous notions that so many unmarried men imagine that the marital duties they will have to undertake are beyond their exhausted strength, and from this reason dread and avoid marriage.

Married men—medical men—or married women themselves, would, if appealed to, tell a very different tale, and vindicate female nature from the vile aspersions cast on it by the abandoned conduct and ungoverned lusts of a few of its worst examples.

I am ready to maintain that there are many females who never feel any sexual excitement whatever. Others, again, immediately after each period, do become, to a limited degree, capable of experiencing it; but this capacity is often temporary, and may entirely cease till the next menstrual period. Many of the best mothers, wives, and managers of households, know little of or are careless about sexual indulgences. Love of home, of children, and of domestic duties are the only passions they feel.\*

As a general rule, a modest woman seldom desires any sexual gratification for herself. She submits to her husband's embraces, but principally to gratify him; and, were it not for the desire of maternity, would far rather be relieved from his attentions. No nervous or feeble young man need, therefore, be deterred from marriage by any exaggerated notion of the arduous duties required from him. Let him be well assured, on my authority backed by the opinion of many, that the married woman has no wish to be placed on the footing of a mistress. . . .

In strong contrast to the unselfish sacrifices such married women make of their feelings in allowing cohabitation, stand out others, who, either from ignorance or utter want of sympathy, although they are model wives in every other respect, not only evince no sexual feeling, but, on the contrary, scruple not to declare their aversion to the least manifestation of it. Doubtless this may, and often does, depend upon disease, and if so, the sooner the suffering female is treated the better. Much more frequently, however, it depends upon apathy, selfish indifference to please, or unwillingness to overcome a natural repugnance for cohabitation.

Other mental conditions may influence the female. Thus, the High Church enthusiast may consider it her strictly religious duty to be separated from her husband during the forty days of Lent; and . . . I have given an instance of a

\* The physiologist will not be surprised that the human female should in these respects differ but little from the female among animals. We well know it as a fact that the female animal will not allow the dog or stallion to approach her except at particular seasons. In many a human female, indeed, I believe, it is rather from the wish of pleasing or gratifying the husband than from any strong sexual feeling, that cohabitation is so habitually allowed. Certainly, during the months of gestation this holds good. I have known instances where the female has during gestation evinced positive loathing for any marital familiarity whatever. In some exceptional cases, indeed, feeling has been sacrificed to duty, and the wife has endured, with all the self-martyrdom of womanhood, what was almost worse than death.

wife refusing to cohabit with her husband because she would not again become a mother. I was lately in conversation with a lady who maintains women's rights to such an extent that she denied the husband any voice in the matter, whether or not cohabitation should take place. She maintained, most strenuously, that as the woman bears the consequences—has all the discomfort of being nine months in the family-way, and thus is obliged to give up her amusements and many of her social relations—considering too that she suffers all the pains and risks of childbirth—a married woman has a perfect right to refuse to cohabit with her husband. I ventured to point out to this strong-minded female that such conduct on her part might be, in a medical point of view, highly detrimental to the health of the husband, particularly if he happened to be strongly sexually disposed. She, however, refused to admit the validity of my argument, and replied that such a man, unable to control his feelings, ought to have married a street-walker, not an intellectually disposed person, who could not and ought not to be obliged to devote her time to duties only compatible with the position of a female drudge or wet-nurse.

I am not prepared to say what weight Sir James Hannen would attach to such evidence in the case of a man seeking a divorce, and I am not aware that counsel has as yet urged such conduct on the part of the female in extenuation of immorality on the part of the husband. Of one thing I am quite certain, that many times in the course of the year I am consulted by conscientious married men, who complain, and I think with reason, that they are debarred from the privileges of marriage, and that their sexual sufferings are almost greater than they can bear in consequence of their being mated to women who think and act as in the above-cited instances. I regret to add that medical skill can be of little avail here. The more conscientious the husband and the stronger his sexual feelings, the more distressing are the sufferings he is doomed to undergo, ultimately too often ending in impotence.

### (iii) Elizabeth Blackwell

One of the first subjects to be investigated by the Christian physiologist is the truth or error of the assertion so widely made, that sexual passion is a much stronger force in men than in women. Very remarkable results have flowed from the attempts to mould society upon this assertion. A simple Christian might reply, "Our religion makes no such distinction; male and female are as one under guidance and judgment of the Divine law." But the physiologist must go farther, and use the light of principles underlying physical truth in order to understand the meaning of facts which arraign and would destroy Christianity.

This mental element of human sex exists in major proportion in the vital force of women, and justifies the statement that the compound faculty of sex is as strong in woman as in man. Those who deny sexual feeling to women, or consider it so light a thing as hardly to be taken into account in social arrangements, confound appetite and passion; they quite lose sight of this immense spiritual force of attraction, which is distinctly human sexual power, and which exists in so very large a proportion in the womanly nature. The

#### 40. Contraception in England, France, and the United States

A graduate of Dartmouth medical college, Charles Knowlton (1800-1850) became famous with the publication of 'Fruits of Philosophy, or the Private Companion of Young Married People' (1832). The treatise, which advocated the use of birth control on medical, economic, and social grounds, challenged many of the accepted values and medical theories of the period; as a result, the author of this "scurrilous" publication was prosecuted, fined, and sentenced to three months in jail. The official reaction to Knowlton's work, however, did not in any way reflect the favorable public response to it: the book went through nine American editions. The work was published in England in 1834, but achieved little notoriety until 1877, when Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant, advocates of freedom of the press, were prosecuted for publishing it. As in the United States, the result of this prosecution was to popularize Knowlton's book, which now began to sell over 250,000 copies a year. In addition, the publicity given to 'Fruits of Philosophy' in the trial may have spawned a demand for new contraceptive techniques in England.

The French, by contrast, simply practiced birth control without writing or publishing much about it. Demographic studies suggest the widespread usage of contraception, probably coitus interruptus, even before 1800 in

SOURCES: (i) Charles Knowlton, *Fruits of Philosophy, or the Private Companion of Young Married People* (London, n.d.), pp. 33-36. (ii) Louis-François-Etienne Bergeret, *The Preventive Obstacle, or Conjugal Onanism*, tr. P. de Marmon (New York, 1870), pp. 3-4, 12, 20-22, 25, 56-57, 100-101, 111-13. Originally published in Paris in 1868.

France, more than two generations earlier than in any other country. In the second selection Dr. Louis-F.-E. Bergeret (b. 1814), chief physician of the Arbois Hospital (Jura), reports on the cases he has had to treat as a result of what he calls sexual or conjugal frauds, especially the "dangerous practice of Onan" (withdrawal). In his belief that severe illness and even death followed from such practices, Bergeret reflects the standard French medical opinion, but in spite of such warnings, the French birthrate continued to fall.

(i) Charles Knowlton

There have been several means proposed and practised for *checking* conception. I shall briefly notice them, though a knowledge of the *best* is what concerns us. That of withdrawal immediately before emission is certainly effectual, if practised with sufficient care. But if, (as I believe), Dr. Dewees' theory of conception be correct; and as Spallanzani's experiments show that only a trifle of semen even largely diluted with water may impregnate by being injected into the vagina, it is clear that nothing short of entire withdrawal is to be depended on.\* But the old notion that the semen must enter the uterus to cause conception, has led many to believe that a partial withdrawal is sufficient, and it is on this account that this error has proved mischievous, as all important errors generally do. It is said by those who speak from experience, that the practice of withdrawal has an effect upon the health similar to temperance in eating. As the subsequent exhaustion is, probably, mainly owing to the shock the nervous system sustains in the act of coition, this opinion may be correct. It is further said that this practice serves to keep alive those fine feelings with which married people first come together. Still I leave it for every one to decide for himself whether this check be so far satisfactory as not to render some other very desirable.

As to the boudruche, which consists in a covering used by the male made of very delicate skin, it is by no means calculated to come into general use. It has been used to secure from syphilitic affections.

Another check which the old idea of conception has led some to recommend, with considerable confidence, consists in introducing into the vagina, previous to connexion, a very delicate piece of sponge, moistened with water, to be immediately afterwards withdrawn by means of a very narrow ribbon attached to it. But as our views would lead us to expect, this check has not proved a sure preventive. As there are many little ridges or folds in the vagina, we cannot suppose the withdrawal of the sponge would dislodge all the semen in every instance. If, however, it were well moistened with some liquid which acts chemically upon the semen, it would be pretty likely to destroy the fecundating property of what might remain. But if this check were ever so sure, it would, in my opinion, fall short of being equal, all things considered, to the one I am about to mention—one which not only dislodges

\* William P. Dewees was a nineteenth-century American physician and professor of midwifery. Lazzaro Spallanzani was an eighteenth-century Italian anatomist and physiologist.—EDS.

the semen pretty effectually; but at the same time destroys the fecundating property of the whole of it.

It consists in syringing the vagina immediately after connexion, with a solution of sulphate of zinc, of alum, pearlsh, or any salt that acts chemically on the semen, and at the same time produces no unfavourable effect on the female. In all probability, a vegetable astringent would answer—as an infusion of white oak bark, of red rose leaves, of nutgalls, and the like. A lump of either of the above-mentioned salts, of the size of a chestnut, may be dissolved in a pint of water, making the solution weaker or stronger, as it may be borne without producing any irritation to the parts to which it is applied. These solutions will not lose their virtues by age. A *female syringe*, which will be required in the use of this check, may be had at the shop of an apothecary, for a shilling or less. If preferred, the semen may be dislodged, as far as it can be by syringing with simple water, after which some of the solution is to be injected, to destroy the fecundating property of what may remain lodged between the ridges of the vagina, &c.

I know the use of this check requires the woman to leave her bed for a few moments, but this is its only objection, and it would be unreasonable to suppose that any check can ever be devised entirely free of objections. In its favour, it may be said, it costs nearly nothing; it is sure; it requires no sacrifice of pleasure; it is in the hands of the female; it is to be used *after*, instead of before connexion, a weighty consideration in its favour, as a moment's reflection will convince any one; and last, but not least, it is conducive to cleanliness and preserves the parts from relaxation and disease. The vagina may be very much contracted by a persevering use of astringent injections, and they are frequently used for this purpose, in cases of *proidentia uteri*, or a sinking down of the womb. Subject as women are to fluor albus [leukorrhœa] and other diseases of the genital organs, it is rather a matter of wonder they are not more so considering the prevailing practices. Those who have used this check, (and some have used it to my certain knowledge, with entire success, for nine or ten years, and under such circumstances as leave no room to doubt its efficacy), affirm they would be at the trouble of using injections merely for the purposes of health and cleanliness. . . .

What has now been advanced in this work will enable the reader to judge for himself, or herself, of the efficacy of the chemical or syringe check, and time will probably determine whether I am correct in this matter; for I do know that those married females who have much desire to escape, will not stand for the little trouble of using this check, especially when they consider that on the score of cleanliness and health alone, it is worth all this trouble. A great part of the time no check is necessary, and women of experience and observation, with the information conveyed by this work, will be able to judge pretty correctly when it is and when it is not. They may rest assured that none of the salts mentioned will have any deleterious effect. The sulphate of zinc is commonly known by the name of white vitriol. This, as well as alum, have been much used for leucorrhœa. Acetate of lead would doubtless be effec-

tual—indeed, it has proved to be so; but I do not recommend it, because I conceive it possible that a long continued use of it might impair the instinct.

I hope that no failures will be charged to inefficacy of this check which ought to be attributed to negligence, or insufficient use of it. I will therefore recommend at least two applications of the syringe, the sooner the surer: yet it is my opinion that five minutes' delay would not prove mischievous, perhaps not ten.

(ii) Louis-F.-E. Bergeret

One of the most powerful instincts nature has placed in the heart of man is that which has for its object the perpetuation of the human race. But this instinct, this inclination, so active, which attracts one sex towards the other, is liable to be perverted, to deviate from the path nature has laid out. From this arises a number of fatal aberrations which exercise a deplorable influence upon the individual, upon the family and upon society. I have observed such painful examples of this, I have been so struck by the disastrous consequences which have resulted from this cause, that I cannot resist the desire of giving publicity to my observations.

We hear constantly that marriages are less fruitful, that the increase of population does not follow its former ratio. I believe that this is mainly attributable to genesiac frauds. It might naturally be supposed that these odious calculations of egotism, these shameful refinements of debauchery, are met with almost entirely in large cities, and among the luxurious classes; and that small towns and country places yet preserve that simplicity of manners attributed to primitive society, when the *pater familias* was proud of exhibiting his numerous offspring. Such, however, is not the case, and I shall show that those who have an unlimited confidence in the patriarchal habits of our country people are deeply in error. At the present time frauds are practised by all classes. . . .

The laboring classes are generally satisfied with the practice of Onan, pederasty, or other modes *in vase indebito*. They are seldom familiar with the sheath invented by Dr. Condom, and bearing his name.

Among the wealthy, on the other hand, the use of this preservative is generally known. It favors frauds by rendering them easier; but it does not afford complete security. . . .

Case X.—This couple belongs to two respectable families of vintners. They are both pale, emaciated, downcast, sickly.

The physiognomy of the husband is suggestive of the fair, flaxen sons of Germany, within whose blue eyes lurk the fires that consumed Werther.

The wife with her dark, though pallid complexion, her bright black eyes, flashing with passion, resembles the ardent daughters of the South.

They have been married for ten years; they first had two children, one immediately after the other, but in order to avoid an increase of family, they have had recourse to conjugal frauds. Being both very amorous, they have

found this practice very convenient to satisfy their inclinations. They have employed it to such an extent, that up to a few months ago, when their health began to fail, the husband had intercourse with his wife habitually two and three times in the twenty-four hours.

The following is the condition of the woman: She complains of continual pains in the lower part of the abdomen and kidneys. These pains disturb the functions of the stomach and render her nervous. The pains are accompanied by abundant leucorrhœa and menorrhagia, which exhaust her. By the touch we find a very intense heat, great sensibility to pressure, and all the signs of a chronic metritis. The patient attributes positively her present state to the too frequent approaches of her husband.

The husband does not attempt to exculpate himself, as he also is in a state of extreme suffering. It is not in the genital organs, however, that we find his disorder, but in the whole general nervous system; his history will find its place in the part of this work relative to general disturbances. . . .

Case XIV.—Mrs. X.—Married young, she had a male child the first year. The father declares that his son must be the sole heir of his fortune, in order to perpetuate the fatuous tradition of the family; but being of very ardent passions, he has with his wife very frequent and fraudulent connections.

Five or six years pass in this way without any trouble; but, towards the age of thirty, this lady begins to feel heavy pains in the hypogastrium and kidneys. Very soon these pains become continued and intolerable. She cannot bear copulation; she is obliged to spend most of her time in bed; her existence is miserable, her nervous system excited, her moral nature deeply affected.

After a rather long treatment, which had somewhat modified her state, she goes to spend the summer season at the springs of Plombières, and comes back much better.

I then advise her to become pregnant. This happens without delay, and gestation causes no inconvenience.

After her confinement, Mrs. X recovers perfectly; all lesions of the uterus have completely disappeared.

She has since had two more children, and her health has continued to be good. . . .

Case LV.—Mme. X.—Married very young; in the first year she has a boy, who is received with the greatest joy. The husband takes his oath that he will stop there, and remains faithful to it. He has been heard many times to ridicule plain people, who do not recoil from the prospect of a large family. This improvident defrauder was cruelly punished; his son died at the age of sixteen, of typhoid fever.

He immediately set to work to repair the misfortune; but his wife, during her long period of unfruitfulness which had been sullied by the continued frauds of her husband, had come to me to complain of acute pains in the womb. A new conception was sought in vain—all aptitude to pregnancy had vanished; there was sterility and despair.

Nevertheless, after two years of useless attempts and the use of all sorts

of means to favor conception, I one day met the husband with a happy countenance; his wife was pregnant.

But his joy was of short duration. The uterine functions, revived for a moment, had not the strength to bear the fruit long enough; she miscarried at five months.

All subsequent attempts at fecundation failed, with an organ inert and powerless. . . .

Case XCI—A married couple present themselves before me with pale and haggard faces.

The woman is suffering from a very painful gastralgia.

The husband complains of all sorts of troubles, which may be summed up in a very distressing hypochondriasis.

They both complain of leading a miserable life. They are still quite young; the man is thirty, and the woman twenty-six. Married for nine years, they had several children very promptly; later, they began to employ fraudulent stratagems: both being very passionate, they have abused these without limitation.

Nevertheless—and I would call attention to this circumstance, as indicating how physicians may be misled by false answers from patients whose lips are sealed by a sense of shame from making painful avowals—on my first questioning the husband concerning conjugal frauds, he replied unhesitatingly in the negative, and protested even against such a suspicion. His provoked wife, however, cast in his teeth these two words: "You lie;" and then declared that I had put my finger upon the wound, and that she had for some time noticed that she had gastric pains, especially after fraudulent connection.

I then prescribed conception, and, after the woman should become pregnant, abstinence. Eight months afterwards I met them. They both looked very well; their physiognomy was quite changed; the abdomen of the woman indicated all the visible signs of a pregnancy approaching term.

The physician must then mistrust very much such affirmations from the mouths of husbands. They are disposed to deny, because in the employment of frauds they are generally the most guilty parties. . . .

Case CIV.—Woman aged sixty-one.

She is still very fresh looking.

Her husband, of the same age, is yet very vigorous, and her lover is forty-eight. She consults me for a profuse, greenish, tenacious leucorrhœa; vesical tenesmus; nothing organic in the uterus. She begins to declare, even before I had asked her a single question on the subject, *that it cannot be any bad disease*. "You understand," said she, "*at my age it is impossible!*" She saw that I mistrusted her words; and when pressed by somewhat explicit interrogatories, she confessed that she had connection with a lover, and that though she could not tell why he was taking them, she found a box of pills in his closet; I asked her to show them to me: they were capsules of copaiba.\*

\* Used for the treatment of venereal disease.—EDS.

### 43. Abortion experiences in England, France, and the United States

In the absence of reliable contraceptive practices, unwanted pregnancies were very common in the nineteenth century. For the prosperous married woman, an unexpected baby was an inconvenience and a threat to health, but for women of the poorer classes, whether married or single, it could spell economic and social disaster. In the excerpts in the first selection, Henrietta Maria Stanley, Lady Stanley of Alderly (1807-95), a member of the English aristocracy who had borne nine children in seventeen years, writes to her husband of the self-induced abortion they both desired. The second selection is a case study of a Parisian servant who, believing that she was pregnant, submitted to an unnecessary abortion performed by a midwife. The third selection is an account of a court case from Saint Johnsbury, Vermont, in which a doctor was tried for "producing criminal abortion" on a servant named Olive Ashe, who had been impregnated by a young farmer whom she had worked for. The girl died as a result of the operation, which was performed in the sixth month of pregnancy.

#### (i) The Stanleys

[Edward to Henrietta, Nov. 9, 1847]

My dearest love:

This your last misfortune is indeed most grievous & puts all others in the shade. What can you have been doing to account for so juvenile a proceeding, it comes very opportunely to disturb all your family arrangements & revives the nursery & Williams in full vigour. I only hope it is not the beginning of another flock for what to do with them I am sure I know not. I am afraid however it is too late to mend & you must make the best of it tho' bad is best. . . .

SOURCES: (i) Nancy Mitford, *The Ladies of Alderly* (London, 1938), pp. 142-45; (ii) Dr. H. Bayard, "Avortement. Simulation de grossesse. Tympanite. Ovarite," *Annales d'Hygiène Publique et de Médecine Légale*, 37 (Jan. 1847): 464-65; (iii) C. P. Frost, "Report of a Trial for Criminal Abortion," *The American Medical Monthly and New York Review*, 14 (Sept. 1860): 196-97, 201-2. The editors wish to thank Professor Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, University of Pennsylvania, for contributing this case.

[Henrietta to Edward, Nov. 9, 1847]

A hot bath, a tremendous walk & a great dose have succeeded but it is a warning. . . . I feel not too well which makes me idle.

[Edward to Henrietta, Nov. 10, 1847]

I hope you are not going to do yourself any harm by your violent proceedings, for though it would be a great bore it is not worth while playing tricks to escape its consequences. If however you are none the worse the great result is all the better.

[Henrietta to Edward, Nov. 10, 1847]

I was sure you would feel the same horror I did at an increase of family but I am reassured for the future by the efficacy of the means.

### (ii) Marie Maudoin

In the month of July 1845, Marie Maudoin entered service as a domestic for a married couple named Mermet, merchants in the rue de Sentier. Her previous conduct had always been good, and she had been in the same household for eight years.

During the last days of the month of April 1846, Marie Maudoin began to complain of ill health. On Thursday, April 30, she asked a young woman named Besson, a working girl in the house, to lend her 30 francs, which she needed, so she said, that very evening, and when this young woman was not able to give her this amount, she made up her mind, against her better judgment, to ask her masters to advance her 30 francs in wages. She replied in an evasive manner to the questions addressed to her on this subject, limiting herself to saying that she had to have these 30 francs, and that she had to go to the suburb of Saint-Denis.\* She left at nine in the evening and was gone for about a half hour.

On the first of May, Marie Maudoin felt sick; she went to bed early. The next day she was more seriously indisposed, complained of indigestion, fainted several times, and lost a great deal of blood. She was extremely pale.

A doctor was called. He suspected that Marie Maudoin had just had a miscarriage in the second or third month of pregnancy.

At first the Maudoin girl claimed that her illness was caused by a simple [menstrual] suppression,† followed by an abundant loss of blood caused by a foot-bath she had taken. Then, surrendering to the evidence, she admitted to a premature *accouchement*, and decided to make a confession, which, while revealing her guilt, pointed to the midwife Foriat as having been guilty of a far more serious crime.

Marie Maudoin declared that at the beginning of the month of April, believing she was pregnant, she had gone to the residence of the Foriat woman,

\* Saint-Denis was one of the poorest and most crowded neighborhoods in Paris.—EDS.

† Medical theory held that menstrual delay or stoppage endangered women's health.—EDS.

rue du Faubourg-Saint-Denis, whose sign she had seen on the street. This woman, after having examined her, told her she was pregnant. After a fortnight she returned there; the Foriat woman confirmed that she was pregnant, adding that she would terminate it for 100 francs. Marie made the mistake of discussing this strange proposition; and in recognition of her feeble resources the Foriat woman reduced the amount to 30 francs. On April 30 Marie went there again with the money.

As soon as the midwife saw her, she understood the purpose of her visit. She went into a small room that opened onto the entry hall. Marie heard the noise of a drawer being opened and closed; the Foriat woman came back to her carrying something wrapped in cloth; the Maudoin girl felt herself punctured; she felt faint, and a few moments later blood began to flow. When the Foriat woman received the 30 francs, she told Marie that she would be rid of the baby in nine days at the latest, that she should take a bath and put her feet in water, and that she should bring her the blood-stained linens so she could have them laundered in such a way that the girl's masters would not notice anything. The Maudoin girl described the Foriat woman's apartment exactly, and when she was brought into her presence, she recognized her.

Iron needles of various sizes were seized by the authorities from a drawer in a piece of furniture placed in the small room off the entrance hall in the Foriat woman's apartment.

In the course of the court inquiry, the Maudoin girl stated *that she had believed herself to be pregnant, and that she had felt quickening*. We were charged by the president of the Assize Court to determine the condition of the accused.

[There follows a detailed description of the medical examination, which revealed evidence that there had been a pregnancy.]

In subsequent visits we confirmed the occurrence of menstruation, twice; the diminution of the size of the abdomen; the empty state of the uterus; and the presence in the pelvis of a considerable ovarian tumor. This condition appeared to us to be the result of the operation that had been performed on the Maudoin girl.

After deliberating for half an hour, the jury returned a verdict of not guilty relative to the Maudoin girl, who was set free.

Furthermore, it found the Foriat woman guilty, though with extenuating circumstances. She was sentenced to eight years in solitary confinement.

### (iii) Olive Ashe

~~An individual, a native of Ireland, styling himself Dr. W. H. M. Howard, and professing to be an English surgeon of great renown, was arraigned at the January Term (1859) of the Orange County (Vt.) Court, upon an indictment charging him with producing criminal abortion on Miss Olive Ashe, and also with causing her death thereby.~~

~~From the evidence adduced on trial, (the minutes of which have been kindly furnished me by the presiding Judge, Hon. James Barrett,) it appeared~~

nineteenth century the "unnatural" crime of infanticide deeply troubled professional men and municipal officials in both France and England; they regarded it as an instance of social pathology to be studied, remedied, and of course punished. The following selections depict the extreme measures taken to dispose of infants. The first is an account of a French court case that was printed in the pioneering public health journal 'Annales d'hygiène publique.' The case recounts the story of a young girl who, in order to save her mother's honor, murdered her newborn sister. In the second selection, the Coroner of Nottingham supplies statistics from inquests held for infants who died in suspicious circumstances.

(i) La veuve M— and her daughter

A woman, widowed for eight years, became pregnant, and in spite of the precautions she took to conceal her pregnancy, the fact that she had given birth was noticed. She stated that she had indeed given birth the night of March 7-8 at three in the morning, and that, by mistake, her baby had been thrown into the cesspool. An investigation was therefore ordered and resulted in the discovery of the cadaver of a newborn infant of the female sex. Two physicians charged with performing the autopsy stated that it had been born at term and was born alive, that it had breathed, that it could only have lived a few instants, and that it bore no trace of wounds or organic lesions that could explain the death, a death that was in all probability the result of immersion in the cesspool and the resulting suffocation.

The daughter of Widow M—, young Alzira, age sixteen, who shared her mother's bed, having been questioned about what had taken place on the night of March 7-8, recounted with the greatest sincerity all the events that had followed the delivery, a story from which it emerged that death was deliberately dealt to the newborn child, and that it was she, following her mother's instructions, who had dropped the child into the latrines.

Toward three in the morning the mother had awakened her, complaining of being ill. On her return from going to find a light at a neighbor's, the daughter M— had found her mother standing and at her feet a baby. Her mother had returned to bed, had held the child on her knees, and had it drink a little sugar water. Then she had wrapped it in a kerchief, and handing the whole thing to her daughter, she had told her to go throw it into the cesspool. "I began to cry," added the young Alzira, "for I felt that what she asked me to do was not good; I think I even said this to her; but she insisted so vigorously, telling me that she would be dishonored in the eyes of the world, and that this dishonor would fall on us, that I gave up. I carried out my mother's order. As the pit is not, I believe, deep, I heard the bundle fall; the child did not utter the tiniest cry. I hurried back to my room where I found my mother nearly unconscious. As soon as she could speak, she asked me if I

#### 44. Infanticide

For the woman desperate to rid herself of an unwanted—and often illegitimate—baby, murder sometimes seemed the only recourse. By the mid-

SOURCES: (i) "Infanticide.—Asphyxie dans une fosse d'aisances.—Complicité d'une jeune fille" (Cours d'assises de la Marne), *Annales d'Hygiène Publique et de Méde-*

*cine Légale*, 38 (July 1847): 462-63. (ii) Great Britain, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1862, XXII, 4th report of the Medical Officer of the Privy Council, pp. 192-93.



was really sure the child was in the pit. On hearing my affirmative response, she added, 'Keep my secret. I did it to preserve our honor.'"

(ii) The Nottingham inquests

Mr. Browne, the coroner for Nottingham, said, that he believed child-murder to be of much more frequent occurrence than is detected, and added that mothers in that town are very careless about their children, and that the mortality arising from this cause is very considerable. In illustration of this fact he referred to the large number of inquests which he has held on the bodies of infants found dead, and furnished a return here subjoined, together with the note which accompanied it:—

INQUESTS HELD IN THE TOWN OF NOTTINGHAM ON THE BODIES OF INFANTS FOUND IN PRIVIES AND THE CANAL, OR EXPOSED IN THE FIELDS OR OPEN PLACES, FROM JANUARY 1856 TO OCTOBER 1861

Date	Sex			
1856:				
January 9	Male	child	-	Found dead in a privy
" 17	Female	"	-	"
February 16	"	"	-	" Verdict—Wilful Murder
March 6	"	"	-	Found near the footway in the meadows. Verdict—Wilful Murder
Sept. 15 & 19	"	"	-	Found in a field. Verdict—Wilful Murder
1857:				
March 14	Male	"	-	Found in a privy
" 18	"	"	-	Found in a chamber utensil
" 26	"	"	-	Found in one of the new streets of Nottingham, where it had been placed immediately after birth. Verdict—Wilful Murder
October 10	"	"	-	Found by the canal side. Verdict—Wilful murder
November 4	Female	"	-	Found in a privy
" 10	Male	"	-	Found in the meadows
1858:				
January 5	Female	"	-	This child was found in the general cemetery. A grave had been dug for an interment, and left for a time, and on the sexton returning to it he found the body of this child had been thrown in. Verdict—Wilful Murder
May 4	Male	"	-	Found under a bed. Died from want of attention at the birth
1859:				
February 28	"	"	-	Found in the canal
September 9	"	"	-	"

Date	Sex		
1861:			
February 19	"	"	- Found in the church cemetery. Verdict—Wilful Murder
June 26	Female	"	- Found in a privy. Verdict—Wilful Murder
October 8	"	"	- Found in a privy

[The coroner's accompanying letter follows.]

I now send you a return of the inquests held by me since the beginning of the year 1856, on the bodies of children found in privies, in the canal, or exposed in the fields or open places. Any other returns which you may wish for, and I can give, shall be made out for you.

I had last night an illustration of my view as to the state of morals amongst females employed in Nottingham warehouses. I held an inquest on an illegitimate child whose mother was a warehouse girl living away from her parents' house, though not at a great distance from them, in a hired room. A younger sister was living with her, and she (the sister) was also a warehouse girl, and the mother of an illegitimate child only a few weeks old.

45. A distinguished French midwife cautions against interference in the birth process: Marie-Anne-Victoire Gillain Boivin

In the following excerpts from a textbook used by the students of the Paris Midwifery School, Marie Boivin (1773–1841), midwife-superintendent of the Royal College of Health, and superintendent of the Paris Maternity Hospital, cautions against undue interference in the birth process. Boivin belonged to a unique French tradition of trained and licensed midwives who worked within the medical establishment and were closely associated with the great Parisian teaching hospitals. A research scientist, as well as a teacher, Boivin invented a new kind of speculum and was the first to demonstrate the nature of the hydatid mole, a tumor that produces the symptoms of pregnancy. As in England and America, most births in France still took place at home; the obstetrical patients on whom Boivin and her students practiced came from the poorest families in the city.

If daily practice shows that the terrible judgment that condemns women to give birth only with pain is not equally true for all women, if pain is not absolutely necessary in childbirth, why give up all hope of finding a way to ease the lot of those women who seem to be so condemned, indeed, to become mothers only amidst the torments of frightful agony?

SOURCE: Marie-Anne-Victoire Gillain Boivin, *Mémorial de l'art des accouchemens, ou Principes fondés sur la pratique de l'Hospice de la Maternité de Paris et sur celle des plus célèbres praticiens nationaux et étrangers*, 3d ed. (Paris, 1824), pp. iv, 406.

[In a table Boivin compares the record of two English physicians using instruments with the record of the midwives under her supervision at the Paris Maternity Hospital. These records, based on thousands of cases, showed a significantly higher incidence of cesarians and deliveries by instrument by the doctors: 1 in 43 deliveries vs. 1 in 62 for the midwives. Boivin then goes on to discuss these results.]

The conclusions that can be drawn from these results are too obvious to need explanation: we close by observing that *mechanical* deliveries (with instruments) are much more frequent in the practice of the Englishmen we have cited than they are in the practice of the Maternity Hospital, and this can be best explained by ascribing to them what Professor Dubois says in his lectures about those practitioners who build glorious reputations for themselves on the number of difficult deliveries they have encountered in their practice. "It is," says the professor, "because they want to perform the delivery peremptorily; they do not want to give nature, who is wiser than they, time to complete her work; they oppose her, thwart her, torment her, considering themselves fortunate that they were able to appear indispensable." "The abuse of the art," says Denman, "produces more numerous and more serious evils than all the imperfections of nature."

#### 48. A minister's wife gives birth to a boy: Caroline Clive

As a young woman, Caroline Meysey-Wigley (1801-73; Doc. 1.vi), a member of the Worcestershire landed gentry, began to write poems and essays and

SOURCE: *Caroline Clive: From the Diary and Family Papers of Mrs. Archer Clive*, ed. Mary Clive (London, 1949), pp. 133-34, 147-50.

to take an active interest in family financial affairs. Strong-minded and intelligent, she was content to remain single until, at age thirty-nine, she married the Reverend Archer Clive, rector of Solihull, a village near Birmingham. They were extremely happy together and became the parents of two children. A devoted mother, Caroline managed to continue her career as an author and published several novels. The following excerpts from the Clives' diaries describe Caroline's first pregnancy, the birth of their son, Charles, and the early months of his infancy.

[Caroline writing, 1841-42]

Undated.—The fourth month ended and I looked forward most anxiously to signs of quickening. I felt something while sitting in the ballroom at the Meriden archery which made me lift up my eyes and thank God. So there was something, whether it was my child or not. . . .

Oct. 11.—For one week there was decidedly no encrease of motion and almost stillness for several days, which made me uneasy. Since, and on Wednesday last, it had been very marked, more yesterday than ever I felt it. Lady Gordon, whom I asked to describe it, said like wind on the stomach. So did Mrs. Buckley. I said, like chickens moving in a basket; to which she agreed but substituted rabbits. . . . Regurgitated worse than ever. . . .

Jan. 20.—Several have been my falls, but I believe without injury, though always frightening me for my treasure. I fell down half a dozen steps backwards at Whitfield, and once fell sitting on some stone garden steps.

[Archer writing, 1842]

Jan. 31.—Yesterday morning, Sunday, January 30th, at about eight o'clock, Caroline told me that she had perceived symptoms which commenced the night before, of her confinement approaching. They increased after breakfast and I sent for Kimbell, who arrived just before morning church. He said there was no immediate haste and departed about his usual business to return in the evening. I went to church, having carried up Caroline to bed in the chintz room which we had previously fixed on for the lying-in hospital. I read morning prayers, but came out before the sermon and found the signs of labouring advancing. At two o'clock I sent the carriage to Birmingham for Hodgson and sent another messenger to hasten Kimbell's return, for the labour had begun. Kimbell arrived about half-past three. I stayed away from the evening church and remained in the dressing-room, while Caroline groaned away next door. At about half-past six the event was announced to me by Mary as to be expected any moment. I waited and listened anxiously. I prayed for Caroline's welfare, I tried to read my Bible and Lightfoot on the Articles of the Creed of the Holy Catholic Church, but I fear not to much profit. Again I listened. I fancied I heard the word "girl" said, and Mary ran in and told me the child was half born. After, there was a silence for two minutes and I fancied it was a still-born child. Then she rushed in again. I heard a faint cry, and she said, "Oh Archer, such a fine boy and quite safe and well." I shed tears of joy and humbly thanked God for this result. It was

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what both I and Caroline had desired, but what, upon comparing notes, we found that neither had ventured to ask in prayer. Mine had been offered daily for her safety and for her offspring, but I had felt it presumptuous to add male or female, or to say more than "Thy will be done": and hers had been the same. I am, I hope, duly thankful.

At this moment Hodgson arrived and came upstairs. The child cried lustily, was washed, brought in to me, and dressed. I took it in my arms and carried it to Caroline and knelt by her bedside and kissed her. That was a happy moment, and she wonderfully well and stout. At about eight I left the room. The nurses came to shift her and I went downstairs with Mary to dine, Hodgson remaining in the sickroom, and Kimbell departed. But how little did I know what was then taking place, or that my dearest wife was in extreme danger. About half-past eight I went up again and found Hodgson sitting at the bedside feeling her pulse and making her smell salts. A proper haemorrhage had taken place and she was quite exhausted. He had given brandy and sal volatile and did not leave her till past ten, when her strengthening pulse gave him assurance of her safety. Kimbell was again sent for and returned, and the two doctors slept here. She was fed frequently and slept a good deal. They visited her at three and again at five o'clock. She was going on well, and in the morning was quite comfortable. She has continued mending all the day, getting much sleep, and my boy is very healthy. I thank God and pray that these favourable appearances may continue, and go to bed tonight full of comfort and hope and thankfulness.

[Caroline writing, 1842]

Feb. 21.—Three weeks and a day since our boy was born. I did not care very much about him the two first days, except when Archer brought him to me first. He seemed to me scarcely alive, or really in the world. Since then I have grown to love him beyond everything except Archer, and to think his society, when he comes to feed upon me, perfectly delightful. He weighed seven pounds six ounces when he was born and measured twenty-one inches. He has dark blue eyes and brown hair, but is not the least pretty as yet. He is very well made and has nice little red hands, mottled, and white nails. His snub nose excites Archer's daily rebuke. He says it is the Clive nose as to the bottle, but wants the bridge. Bad as the pain of his birth was, I thought to myself several times that I wondered people imagined they were going to die in consequence. It did not seem at all like dying, and afterwards when I was really in danger I did not know what was going on. I merely remembered an inclination to sleep. Nothing else than the common wish to sleep after fatigue. Death would be very easy if I was near dying then—no parting, no quitting of the world; mere sleep without waking. It is something to be remembered that one has entered within the shadow of death.

My nurse is very quiet and lets me have my own way. She manages the boy very well, and I manage myself. I have done boldly and eaten fruit and vegetables though ordered not. They said my milk would suffer and disagree with the boy; but he was in torments of pain in consequence of a dose of castor oil

which I took without any effect upon myself, and now I do well with my usual diet and it does him no harm. My doctors have taken leave of me, and I am sitting again in the library, dining at the usual hour and getting up to breakfast. The nurse has sundry superstitions. She asked me one day with apologies whether I had wished for anything during my pregnancy without succeeding in getting it. I said no, and enquired why she asked. She said the baby had a habit of licking his lips and rolling his tongue as if he wanted something, and she supposed my unsatisfied longing reappeared in him. The remedy she suggested was some sacramental wine, a leetle drop, and then he would be contented.

Feb. 27.—I went in the evening and was churched.\* Just a month since I was confined. This day four weeks I was in misery and this day I was well, out of doors again, the mother of a fine healthy boy, and once more setting out in life—another stage—with my own dear husband.

Hodgson called to-day and said that for an hour he thought I should have died. I might have awoke perhaps, had I gone to sleep, but the greater danger of my sleeping was that it prevented the medical attendants from judging of my state. He said the brandy, the salts and sal volatile kept the machine going.

He examined the boy and pronounced him perfect in every respect. I heard from Archer to-day for the first time that there had been some doubt about one ankle, but as it was a mere doubt, Archer resolved not to tell me and succeeded in impressing on the nurse his wish that I should not hear of it. It is wonderful how he refrained from telling. Archer can keep a secret to himself in the most perfect manner of anybody I know. He never even talks round it.

Hodgson asked if I loved the child and said he had seen many instances in which there seemed no maternal feeling. He had frequently known the mother very indifferent to the infant being still-born. She was vexed perhaps if its life was of importance for an heirloom but not for itself.

He said "Don't cut his nails, it makes them grow square." Mrs. Hands [the nurse] thought, however, that it was the use of scissors which was forbidden and when I saw a bit of broken nail and Archer offered her scissors to remove it, she said "Oh no, Sir, I never cut them. I bite them if they want it, or tear them. Mr. Hodgson told us scissors were wrong," she added, triumphing in being able to say she and the doctor were of one mind.

March 9.—Mrs. Hands told me that Mrs. Harding's precaution against thrush was, when she was expecting a baby, to catch a frog and keep it in water till the baby came into the world. If any symptoms of thrush appeared, the frog was sewn into a muslin bag and its head put into the child's mouth, who was induced, if possible, to suck it. The rationale, as set forth by Mrs. Harding, was that the frog's breath drew away the thrush. "The frog always dies," added Mrs. Hands.

\* An Anglican church ritual, performed after childbirth, in which thanks is given for the safe delivery of mother and child.—EDS.

I was afflicted with bad dreams till we got into our room again, dreaming constantly that Archer was away, or going on a long journey without me, or not writing, and that he was not my husband and I did not know how to see him and thought he was going to marry somebody else—just as it used to be before we were really married. But I have had none since I can put out my hand and find him there.

March 22.—On the 16th (Archer's birthday) our boy was christened. His names are Charles Meysey Bolton and his sponsors, Mrs. Henry Clive, Charles Wicksted and Mrs. Christopher Musgrave.

The ceremony was performed after the morning service and he cried only enough to satisfy his nurse who said she must have pinched him if he had been totally silent because children who don't cry when christened die soon after. Mrs. Musgrave was in mourning, another unlucky sign. Mrs. Hands said she did not suppose dress really brought ill-luck and yet it was true she knew a young woman once, married in a black gown, and certainly she never had any good fortune from that time.

April 29.—Very few events. The boy goes on very well and has had a wet-nurse since last Monday morning. I nursed him for the last time Sunday 17th, eight days before we succeeded in getting him another cow, but I did him more harm than good at last, and he only cried and kicked the last two days of my attempts. The Cow is the mother of a Calf seven weeks old, who went first to a woman with a baby of thirteen months and next to a dry nurse, when the thirteen month baby insisted on returning to its mother. Both of these processes were prohibited for our child, but the poor little plebian does perfectly well.

## 50. An English mother's problems: The Amberleys

Most parents, even the very rich, were perplexed by the difficulties of rearing a new infant. In this selection from the papers of a prominent English family, Kate Stanley (1842-74) and her husband, John Russell, Lord Amberley, describe the birth of their first child, Frank, and the subsequent difficulties they encountered during his infancy. These excerpts from their journal entries and letters show how close Kate and Amberley were to one another and how involved Amberley was in the care of his first child.

[Amberley writing, 1865]

Aug. 12.—Waking at 4 a.m. I was informed by Kate that she was in pain. It was slight, and she tried to prevent my leaving her. However, after a brief struggle, I got up & told her mother who, finding there was no doubt, at once sent for Merriman. The pains rapidly increased, & by 5 became terrible. From that time until delivery they never ceased. Merriman arrived at 6.30 & at 6.50 I heard him say "It's a boy," & heard its sweet little cry. Lady S. called to me it was a fine boy. I ran & told Maude who was waiting ready dressed. K. calm & happy after it. The baby was washed & brought to her. I thought it a very pretty child & felt very proud of it as a part of her. Very delightful to hear her talking to it. She was quite well all day but much exhausted.

Aug. 14.—Tho' perfectly well K. had much trouble today from baby not sucking. He would not or could not do it. Another baby took a little but K still suffered much pain in her breasts. In the evg. b.d. I sucked a little thinking it might do good, but I could not get much. Since I had to apply all my sucking power to get any milk it is no wonder the infant found it too hard for him. The milk was not nasty, but much too sweet to be pleasant; like the sweetest of syrup. It seems very badly managed by nature that little babies should not always find it as easy to suck as little puppies; but if this is one of the arrangements that was made in consequence of Original Sin of course we must not complain of it. Baby, though so obstinate, is a dear little fellow & it is a great happiness to look at his face & feel he is our own, mine & my darling wife's.

Aug. 15.—Baby still refuses to suck. K. was not very happy or comfortable today having had a bad night & suffering much from headache. I was annoyed at the nursing not being successful & did not feel so happy as the first days. However Lady Stanley says she is sure to nurse with perseverance.

Aug. 16.—K not getting on well & the baby still not sucking.

Aug. 17.—In the evg after my walk I heard he had taken K.'s breast, wh. was a great comfort.

Aug. 20.—K. very low & weak; nurses her baby but has not enough to give it.

SOURCE: *The Amberley Papers*, ed. Bertrand and Patricia Russell (London, 1937), 1: 402-7, 413-16. The editors are grateful to Dr. Patricia Otto Klaus, Belvedere, Calif., for guiding us to this document.

Aug. 21.—Lady Stanley appears to be dispirited about K., says she is too weak, & that baby is not flourishing as he does not get enough. K. cannot bear the notion of a wet-nurse & I dislike it nearly as much, but there seems no hope of her nursing now.

Aug. 22.—Papa, Mama, the boys & Agatha came today\*; Mama admired baby & thought him very fine. I thought he looked pale, & am afraid we must get him a wet-nurse if he is to thrive. However, all who saw him seemed to be pleased with him. Dear K. struggled hard against the wet nurse, but in the evening declared her readiness to give up nursing if the child's health would be better with another woman. A terrible disappointment to her, for we both care very much about ladies nursing, but I doubt not her strong sense of duty will overcome the reluctance to relinquish this harassing attempt to feed her baby when nature does not provide the means of doing so.

Aug. 25.—Lady Stanley has found a woman (married three months, confined three weeks) who she thinks will do for a wet nurse.

Aug. 26.—Merriman came today & finally decided that K. must give up nursing. She was of course dreadfully unhappy but bore it very well. Indeed she has been wonderfully good & patient in all her trials. The wet-nurse was examined & approved. She came this evening. K. drove at 12 with Lady S. having been carried down stairs. She came home much exhausted & continued to feel extremely tired all day.

Aug. 28.—Our new wet-nurse was taken away by her husband, who had not been consulted about the arrangement. Inquiries were set on foot for another.

[Kate writing, 1865]

Sept. 5.—Mr. Merriman came & said the pain I felt was no mischief done only weakness & that I was to walk a little; so I went to luncheon for the first time—& drove with Mama to Astle & lay on the sofa on the lawn till 7. E Powell (the wetnurse) came—baby fought a good deal with her about sucking but took it in the evg. . . . A has been too dear & tender all the time of my confinement; full of care gentleness & thought for me, very low several times which made me sad when I did not feel strong enough to cheer him up. He is very dear too about his boy very fond of him & admires him as much as I do—My m. nurse Mrs. Cotton thinks baby has A's eyes but otherwise like me. He frowns too much but he has been so bothered since his birth—This is the 5th woman he has had poor darling—He weighed 9 lbs when born 10 lbs at a fortnight old & he was 23 inches tall altogether very large & very strong.

Oct. 21.—Amberley had a letter from his father telling him he was Prime Minister—Lizzie told me about Davies's brutal treatment of the baby.† I wrote to Mama to ask her advice.

Oct. 23.—I got a letter from Mama advising me to send away Davies at once—so I sent Lizzy out with the baby & Amberley saw her at 12 & told her she must go she came in & saw me & only said it was very unkind to her—

\* Amberley's sister and brothers.—EDS.

† Lizzie was the wet nurse, and Davies the baby's regular nurse.—EDS.

She packed up & left at ½ 2—Lizzy told me many more things after she left of her nasty brutal conduct.

[Kate to Georgiana Peel, Amberley's half-sister, Oct. 24, 1865]

The *good trusted clever* Davies is gone for good—& such a good riddance I never knew of. I have been so deceived & with the very highest recommendations she had, it is too horrid—

My wetnurse (Lizzy) told me that Davies was very unkind to the child. The poor woman had lost her own baby & in her grief she could not help telling me all Davies did to mine feeling for a mother being ignorant of such things. I hardly could have believed it but all the other servants had been disgusted by it & told me the same—so I wrote to consult Mama & she said "send her away at once" which I did at 3 hours notice yesterday, as had she stayed she would have worried Lizzy's milk away with her fury—These are one or two of her horrid ways. It makes my blood boil for my precious little darling, to think what he has had to bear. I am too furious. When he cried she used to shake him—when she washed him she used to stuff the sponge in his little mouth—push her finger (beast!) in his dear little throat—say she hated the child, wished he were dead—used to let him lie on the floor screaming while she sat quietly by & said screams did not annoy her it was good for his lungs, besides she liked me to hear him scream as she thought otherwise I should think she had nothing to do & as soon as I came into the room she would take him into her arms & cant over him as if she loved him dearly. She hated being at Alderley because Mama & Mde [Kate's sister] used always to be coming into the room & to Mama she used to lie & when asked if Baby had been out say yes, when she had never stirred fr. the room—She thought she could manage me as she liked & that I would never find her out or find fault with her, & no more I think I should as I trusted her so implicitly. She would not let the wetnurse suckle him before he came to me, that he might scream & that I might know what a trouble he was—she sat in her room most of the day I find reading novels & never nursed the baby or spoke to it.

She said she meant to leave me in March anyhow as she hated the child & did not think the place grand enough—She said she had been accustomed to double her wages (25£) by the baby's clothes she got—She always put it on wet diapers though the nurse asked her to let her air them & so it often had a stomach ache, then she gave it an empty bottle in its cot to suck the tube & keep it quiet so making it suck in only wind—No wonder it cried & was so unhappy. I am so angry with her—Lizzy has had a child before & she quite understands the care of one & as this one is very strong & very well she will do till I can get a nurse & is far better than that wretch of a woman. I shall not get another in a hurry & without great investigations but shall feel afraid for Davies was so praised & so sensible & nice spoken to me—Of course I will never recommend her.

Karl complained to me also of her behaviour to Baby sweet little lamb I do so love it, & have it so much with me now & superintend its washing & dressing but Lizzy is so nice & loves it nearly like her own. She said she could not

have gone on nursing it if she had seen it treated in that way any longer. I could write much more about her.

## 52. Nursing advice for ladies

In this great age of advice manuals, professional experts intruded with their strictures into all areas of family life. In medicine the superior French and German medical faculties produced monographs and manuals that carried great authority throughout Atlantic civilization, and British and American translations of such works proliferated. In these two selections Alfred Donné (1801-78) and Eugène Bouchut (1818-91), both eminent Parisian physicians and professors of medicine, offer mothers advice about nursing and about selecting wet nurses. As with Dr. Colombat's rules for puberty (Doc. 17.ii), the emphasis is on regularity and constraint. In this mixture of medical and moral advice, mothers are cautioned to distrust their own impulses and to defer to the superior wisdom of the medical experts.

### (i) Eugène Bouchut

In the first days following birth, the children may be frequently put to the breast, for it is a difficult matter to satisfy them; but after the first few weeks, a greater interval should be allowed to elapse between the hours of

SOURCES: (i) Eugène Bouchut, *Practical Treatise on the Diseases of Children and Infants at the Breast*, tr. Peter Huickes Bird, F.R.C.S. (London, 1855), pp. 12-13. Originally published in Paris in 1845. (ii) Alfred Donné, *Mothers and Infants, Nurses and Nursing* (Boston, 1859), pp. 35-58 *passim*, 104-6, 119-20. Originally published in Paris in 1842.

lactation. Women should not be inconsiderately zealous to discharge their duty of nurse, and always endeavour to calm the cries of the child by giving it the breast; they should, having the interest of the nursling at heart, take care of themselves, and not exhaust their strength by too frequent lactation.

During the day, mothers should suckle their children every hour, or every two hours, at least; during the night they should train their child not to wake them to take the breast. This is very easily accomplished; they soon acquire the habit, and experience no injury from it. The mother then, finds in sleep a salutary repose after the fatigues of the day. She may enjoy from six to eight hours uninterrupted sleep, by giving the breast, for the last time, towards eleven or twelve o'clock at night; and by recommencing the next day at six or seven o'clock in the morning. . . .

The mammary glands—which by their seat and form constitute the ornaments of the sex, become, by their functions, the source of a new existence, and are placed, by their structure, under the influence of the moral activity. We cannot, then, too strongly recommend to mothers who suckle their children, to endeavour to acquire the calmness and tranquillity necessary to the direction of a good education. But what words can one use to a woman whose heart thrills at the cries of her child, and whose mind is so deeply disturbed at them? Are we not fearful of seeing the heart get the better of the intelligence, and maternal passion triumph over reason? Nevertheless, the practitioner should deliver his firm and respectful dictum in the midst of these blind and exalted sentiments, which exercise the most disastrous influence on the health of the children.

The mother should be given to understand that the qualities of her milk are rapidly changed by violent mental emotions; and that tranquillity is absolutely necessary to her, in order that she may become a good nurse. What matter the cries of a child which has had the breast to a sufficient extent at the proper hour; which does not suffer, and which experiences no want? If it cries, it is by caprice; we must learn to resist it; then it ceases, and learns for the future not to cry without a motive. In this manner it becomes docile, and its cries assume much value from the time when it is known that they are always a manifestation of suffering.

(ii) Alfred Donné

ON NURSING BY THE MOTHER

*Advantages of nursing by the mother; preference to be given to her.*—There are, indeed, many mothers, whom I would not accept as nurses for other children than their own, whom I believe perfectly capable of nursing their own children, and often preferable even to the best hired nurses. . . .

If we were to allow the ability to nurse a child only to mothers of as robust strength and health as we require in hired nurses, we might nearly abandon the idea that ladies can ever nurse their children; for it is very rarely that we meet with these conditions in women who inhabit large cities, and particularly

among those of certain classes of society. But there are so many compensations for their inferiority in this respect to hired nurses, that it is well to limit, in some degree, our requirements, and not to push severity to excess. Nothing is more common, in fact, than to see, even in Paris, women of medium strength, whose health is not always exempt from a crowd of those little ills which seem inherent to a certain social position, possessing, nevertheless, the qualities essential for a nurse, and performing this office with the greatest success, without experiencing any deterioration in their own health. It would be cruel, indeed, both for the mother and the child, to oppose the inclination to nurse, which these women experience, and to deprive the child of his natural nurse. . . .

*Importance of putting an immediate stop to nursing in certain cases.*—There are cases in which we cannot too soon put a stop to nursing. I have had an opportunity to observe [some] remarkable ones, which prove that, even if compulsion must be used, no hesitation should be felt in like circumstances to transfer the child from the mother to a hired nurse.

A very light-complexioned young mother, in very good health, and of a good constitution, though somewhat delicate, was nursing for the third time, and, as regarded the child, successfully. All at once this young woman experienced a feeling of exhaustion. Her skin became constantly hot; there were cough, oppression, night-sweats; her strength visibly declined, and in less than a fortnight she presented the ordinary symptoms of consumption. The nursing was immediately abandoned, and, from the moment the secretion of milk had ceased, all the troubles disappeared, the mother's health was restored, and, since then,—a period of now three years,—it has not ceased to be excellent, and no suspicious symptoms have again manifested themselves.

A woman of forty years of age, a door-keeper in the house I inhabit, having lost one after another several children, all of whom she had put out to nurse, determined to nurse the last one herself, which was born at the age I have mentioned. This woman, being vigorous and well-built, was eager for the work, and, filled with devotion and spirit, she gave herself up to the nursing of her child with a sort of fury. At nine months she still nursed him from fifteen to twenty times a day.

Having become extremely emaciated, she fell all at once into a state of weakness, from which nothing could raise her, and two days after the poor woman died of exhaustion. . . .

Nursing requires to be conducted with a certain method. It must take place at intervals as well-regulated as possible; the caprices which manifest themselves thus early must be wisely resisted, and bad habits must be avoided; and, when the mother is certain that her child has all which he needs, that he has nursed sufficiently, and that he does not suffer, she must know how to divert his attention, and even be able to bear his cries, without yielding to new importunities. This last point is so essential, that I do not fear to make of it a veritable axiom, in saying, that *every mother who cannot bear to hear her child cry, is incapable of bringing him up well.* . . .



## OF PROFESSIONAL NURSES

*Choice of a nurse.*—If the mother does not intend to nurse her child, it becomes necessary to choose a nurse. In making the selection, suitable precautions are not always taken; much less, doubtless, through indifference or negligence, than in consequence of the general ignorance of the essential conditions to be required in the nurse, and of the evils which are to be feared. Our duty is to enlighten families, by attacking their very general prejudices, their want of attention to what is really important, and their frequently capricious requirements, as well as the trickery of nurses themselves, their defects, and the dangers they present. . . .

A certain family had taken all the ordinary precautions to procure a good nurse for a first-born child. The woman was young, ruddy, and apparently in perfect health.

At the end of a month several pimples were observed on the child's body. No great attention was at first paid to them; but they multiplied rapidly, and assumed such an aspect that it was thought necessary to call a physician. He immediately recognized the nature of the disease, and an examination of the nurse at once confirmed this sad result. She was herself infected, and had transmitted the disease to her nursing, either by her milk or by contact.\*

The despair of the parents may be easily conceived. But this was not the end of their troubles and afflictions. The father wished to dismiss the nurse on the spot; but he was obliged to restrain his indignation and resentment, when he was informed that this nurse had herself become necessary for the cure of the child; that he must not only keep her, but treat her well to induce her to stay, in order through her to reach the child by treatment; that it was not possible to entrust a child, in that condition of disease, to another healthy nurse, to whom it would communicate the disease immediately, &c.

This hard alternative had to be accepted. But all sacrifices proved unavailing; no care could save the child, and it soon miserably perished.

Now, one single precaution had been neglected in this case,—the preliminary and complete examination of the nurse. . . .

*Of the nurse's suckling the child during the night.*—Nurses have not the same reason as mothers to suspend nursing during the night.

The reason of this difference must be obvious. Most ladies who undertake to nurse their children, are not strong enough to bear at the same time the fatigue of nursing itself, and that which results from the interruption or privation of sleep. It is, then, less for the purpose of sparing them, than with a view to preserve their milk, that I advise them to suspend nursing during the night. Rest being an indispensable condition in the secretion of milk, prolonged sleep becomes for them a greater necessity than for hired nurses of

\* Is the venereal disease transmitted in such a case by means of the milk, or by contact and direct conveyance of the contagious principle? This question is not at all determined in the present condition of science. All that I can say is, that by no means, whether by the microscope or any other process of analysis, can the slightest trace of alteration in the milk in syphilitic women be detected.

a more robust constitution. The inconveniences, however, if any exist, are more than compensated by the advantages of nursing by the mother.

~~When late of night come, iffen dem babies wake up and bawl, I set up a screech and out-screech dem till dey shut dere mouth. De louder dey bawl de louder I bawl. Sometime when Marse hear de babies cry, he come down and say, "Why de chillen cry like dat, Ellen?" I say, "Marse, I git so hongry and tired I done drink de milk up." When I talk sassy like dat, Marse jes' shake he finger at me, 'cause he knowed I's a good one and don't let no little mite starve.~~

#### 54. Motherhood in English factory towns

Like American slaves, English working women had to fit pregnancy and motherhood into a life of virtually unceasing labor. As the statements of the Manchester midwife in the first selection reveal, factory women often worked up to the hour of delivery and returned to the mill after a brief confinement. Forced to work in order to feed themselves and their babies, these women either had to try to tend their infants while working at home or had to find someone—frequently a young child—to look after their children while they went out to a factory or sweatshop. In either case, babies were often dosed with opiate-based patent medicines to keep them quiet, as the reports from Nottingham in the second selection reveal. These two sets of testimonies from the 'Parliamentary Papers' show how far removed were the nurseries of the poor from those envisioned by Lydia Child (Doc. 57).

##### (i) Elizabeth Taylor

What is your age?—Fifty-two.

What is your occupation?—Midwifery.

Have you been attached for any time to the Manchester lying-in hospital?—Betwixt nine and ten years.

How long have you been in the habit of delivering women?—I began at twelve years old, in Manchester. . . .

At what age do you find that the factory women are generally delivered of their first child?—From eighteen to nineteen, most of them.

Are the factory women to whom you are called generally married?—I have a good deal of both sorts, both married and unmarried.

Do many of the factory women live with men without being married?—That I cannot tell. I attend many for love-children, but I cannot tell what becomes of them afterwards.

Are miscarriages more common among factory women than among the others whom you attend?—Much more frequent among the factory women.

In which class have you found still births most common?—I never took any particular notice.

Do you find that the children of factory women are as healthy when first

SOURCES: (i) Great Britain, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1833, XX, Factory Inquiry Commission, 1st Report, pp. D3 13-14. (ii) Great Britain, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1843, XIV, Children's Employment Commission, part 1, pp. f. 45, 61-62.

born as those of other women?—No, certainly not; they are more delicate.

To what do you ascribe their being more delicate?—To the mother's being more delicate, from heat, and want of proper food.

How long do the factory women generally work up to the time of their being confined?—Many of them up to the very day; some up to the very hour, as I may say. Some have gone to work before breakfast, and I have had them in bed at two o'clock the same day. A girl has gone to work after her breakfast, and I have delivered her, and all over, by tweve o'clock the same forenoon.

How soon do they go back to the factory after confinement?—Many at the end of a fortnight; three weeks they think a great bit.

Do any factory women complain of pain from working when they are pregnant?—Many complain of pains in their sides and legs.

When you attend a factory woman do you generally find that she has got tea, sugar, gruel, and other such things about her?—Very few of them have such things. . . .

During the winter, do you generally find they have got fire and candles upon such occasions?—No; very rarely. I have had to go to the watchman for a light.

Have they generally got baby-linen?—In a general way the English have, but the Irish not often. . . .

You often examine the persons of factory wives; do you often find any hurt or blemish?—I often find their feet and legs swelled.

Whom do you find most lean, the factory wives or the others whom you attend?—The factory wives are a deal more lean and more delicate.

What do they do with their infants?—Puts them out to nurse to any one they can get.

Do the children do well?—Some of them suffer very bad from this.

##### (ii) Drugging the babies in Nottingham

Elizabeth Smith, 26 years old:—Is married, and has two children; one is now alive, and the other died when nearly two years old; has been a lace runner about 13 years. The business has become much worse of late years; in the best season can earn about 5s. a-week; in the winter about 2s. 6d. if she sticks very close to it; the candles cost 6½d. a-week at this time. To earn 2s. 6d., must begin between seven and eight in the morning, and go on till about nine at night. Has breakfast before she begins; has about one hour to get the dinner ready, and eat it; and half an hour for tea. When a piece is to be finished, perhaps once in a fortnight, has to work on Thursday and Friday, till between 11 and 12; has not of late worked all Friday night, nor on Sunday.

Is near-sighted; the work tries the eyes very much; has sometimes a very bad mist, and also sparks. When she was nursing, kept the child upon her lap. It is very common to give Godfrey's cordial; has known several who have given it to their children. Lives with her husband and child in a low kitchen, (cellar,) and pays 10d. a-week. Her husband is a jobbing labourer; is now out of work; had yesterday no breakfast; a few potatoes and salt for dinner; and a bit of bread and coffee for tea; had a bit of bread and coffee this morning;

her husband had no breakfast; it is now a quarter past two, and she and her child have had no dinner, and do not expect to have any; her husband is gone to seek for work.

NOTE.—This poor woman lives in one of those wretched under-ground rooms, which are not uncommon in this particular part of the town. There were scarcely any articles of furniture, and everything had the appearance of great distress and misery. The daughter had lately had the small-pox. The privies, three in number, are used in common by several houses.

Sarah Johnson, 43 years old:—Has lived in Nottingham all her life. Knows it is quite a common custom for mothers to give Godfrey's and the Anodyne cordial to their infants, "it is quite too common." It is given to infants at the breast; it is not given because the child is ill, but "to compose it to rest, to sleep it," so that the mother may get to work. "Has seen an infant lay asleep on its mother's lap whilst at the lace-frame for six or eight hours at a time." This has been from the effects of the cordial; has never known an infant die suddenly from this cause; has seen many made "very poor creatures by it;" they get very thin: the joints and the head enlarge; they become remarkably listless, and they look vacant. The cordial is discontinued between two and three years old; at this age has known several to have the appearance of idiots. From three to four years old, the laudanum being discontinued, the children "generally begin to come round," if they get over the seasoning. In the present state of trade, it would be impossible for men to do without their wives labouring; they must work, however many children they may have: from the same cause, the children must go out to work as soon as they are able to use the needle. In Nottingham, the girls begin to work younger than the boys, because "it is rather more natural for them to handle the needle."

A. B.—Has been a chemist and druggist for many years in the town of Nottingham. A large quantity of laudanum and other preparations of opium, such as Godfrey's cordial, is sold by the chemists, especially in the poorer neighbourhoods of the town. Knows a chemist who sells as much as a gallon of laudanum a-week in retail; and also knows that several chemists in Nottingham sell many gallons each in the year. A large quantity of solid opium is also sold; it is common, in many of the shops, to keep it ready prepared in small packets, like other articles in constant demand; these are sold at a penny or twopence each. Witness is obliged to prepare the laudanum of a greater strength than is prescribed in the Pharmacopœia, or the persons who purchase it would object. Godfrey's cordial, also called Anodyne cordial, and of which a very large quantity is sold in Nottingham, is prepared stronger of laudanum than is usual in the real Godfrey's cordial as sold in London.

The solid opium is consumed exclusively by adults, men and women, but more by the latter than the former, in the proportion of 3 to 1.

The laudanum is partly consumed by adults, and to a considerable extent by infants. Godfrey's, or the Anodyne cordial, is almost exclusively consumed by infants.

It is a common practice among a large portion of the poorest class of me-

chanics, inhabiting such places as "the Becks" and the "Meadow Platts," habitually to use opium in the fluid or solid form. Has some customers who take as much as an ounce of laudanum in a day; knows one woman who has taken that quantity in his shop.

Among the poorest classes it is a common practice of mothers to administer Godfrey's cordial and laudanum to their infants; the object is to keep them quiet whilst the mother is at work. A case occurred a short time ago of a mother coming into the shop with her child in the arms. Witness remonstrated against giving it laudanum, and told the mother she had better go home and put the child in a bucket of water,—"it would have been the most humane place of putting it out of the way." The mother replied that the infant had been used to the laudanum and must have it, and that it took a halfpenny worth a-day, or 60 drops. Does not know what has become of the child, but "supposes it is done for by this time." It is not uncommon for mothers to begin this practice with infants of a fortnight old; commencing with half a teaspoonful of Godfrey's, or 1 or 2 drops of laudanum. Has known an infant killed with three drops of laudanum, but nothing was said about it. Knows that many infants die by degrees, and that no inquest or other inquiry is made. Has known some odd cases where surgeons have been called to apply the stomach pump; but "infants go off quickly, they are not like grown people." A case of sudden death in an infant from laudanum occurred about three years ago, in which an inquest was held at the sign of the Fox, from Godfrey's cordial. Heard that four children of the same family had died in the same way. The infants which die in a more insidious manner become pale and emaciated and tremulous, and at last seem to sink from emaciation or a decline.

The system has considerably increased since witness has been in the business, which he attributes to the abject poverty of the people. Some females, lace runners, do not get more than half-a-crown per week. Mothers say they have not time to nurse their children, as they must work so many hours to obtain this pittance of a living, "if it be a living."

Mary Colton, 20 years old, lace runner:—Has worked at lace piece since she was six years old, for 14 or 15 hours a-day on the average; used to commence at 6 A.M. in summer, and left off at 10 at night; in winter, at half past 8 A.M., and worked till 10 P.M.; could earn from 4s to 5s. a-week. Was in the habit of sitting from 5 A.M. till 10 P.M. when the work was urgent; never went home to her meals till she was confined, some times had half an hour, oftener not. Was confined of an illegitimate child in November, 1839. When the child was a week old she gave it half a teaspoonful of Godfrey's twice a-day. She could not afford to pay for the nursing of the child, and so gave it Godfrey's to keep it quiet, that she might not be interrupted at the lace piece; she gradually increased the quantity by a drop or two at a time until it reached a teaspoonful; when the infant was four months old it was so "wankle" and thin that folks persuaded her to give it laudanum to bring it on, as it did other children. A halfpenny worth, which was about a teaspoonful and three-quarters, was given in two days; continued to give her this quantity since February,

1840, until this last past (1841), and then reduced the quantity. She now buys a halfpenny worth of laudanum and a halfpenny worth of Godfrey's mixed, which lasts her three days.

Can earn about 3s. a-week now, working from 9 A.M. till 10 P.M., having one hour for dinner, and three-quarters of an hour for tea. If it had not been for her having to sit so close to work she would never have given the child the Godfrey's. She has tried to break it off many times but cannot, for if she did, she should not have anything to eat.

Cannot either read or write; often wishes she had been sent to school, but never had anything to go in.

### 55. Baby farming in England: Police Serjeant Relf

In nineteenth-century England there were several ways to rid oneself of unwanted children. Abortions were available, although they were illegal, highly dangerous and often costly. A more extreme method was infanticide, which by the 1860's had come to be recognized as a national problem. A third option was "baby farming," a system by which the mother paid a third party to house and care for the child. In the absence of legal adoption the baby farm often seemed the most humane alternative to the desperate—often unmarried—mother. But whatever the intention of the mother, the farmed-out child frequently met with a gruesome fate, as the following testimony of a London policeman reveals. In his testimony to a parliamentary committee Relf described in grisly detail an unusually complete system for disposing of unwanted children; Mary Hall's house served as a lying-in hospital, and Hall placed those infants who survived with baby farmers. The outrage caused by the public disclosure of the horrors of the baby farm, together with the lobbying efforts of medical reformers, stirred Parliament, in 1872, to pass legislation to control the worst abuses of the baby farming system. Hall, however, was never punished for her crimes against children, although she was sentenced to two years' hard labor and fined £100 for fraudulently claiming that a baby was the child of a woman who was not in fact the mother.

Abstract Report, by Police Serjeant Relf, of the Case of Mary Hall for Fraud.—P Division, 30 November 1870

I beg most respectfully to report for the information of Mr. Superintendent Gernon, the following abstract of the case of Mary Hall, lately residing at No. 6, Chapel-place, Cold Harbour-lane, Camberwell. . . .

This Mrs. Hall, and David, her husband, have resided at the above address since May, 1864, paying a yearly rental of £30, besides rates and taxes.

SOURCE: Great Britain, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1871, VII, Select Committee on Protection of Infant Life, pp. 229-32. The editors wish to thank Professor George Behlmer, University of Washington, for kindly offering us a copy of this document.

For three years prior to that date they lived at No. 4, Denmark-road, Camberwell, a short distance from Chapel-place. . . .

The first evidence I would direct your attention to is that of Mrs. Warren, who lives at No. 5, next door, and her servant, Elizabeth Culven. They prove undoubtedly that a great number of ladies were seen at Mrs. Hall's pregnant, sometimes five or more at a time; in addition to the servant hearing women groaning at night (as the head of her bed was next the wall), they usually, once or more a week, experienced a most sickening odour of something being burnt or boiled of a fleshy kind, and, strange to relate, never heard a child cry or saw one leave the house on any occasion during the whole time Hall has been there. This is confirmed by Mr. and Mrs. Tennant, who, during 1867-8, lived at No. 7. As to what she saw it is best stated in her own words. They are as follows:

"I have seen as many as six or seven women there at a time in the family-way. I have noticed bad smells from something or other being burnt. I have seen Mrs. Hall carry an infant from the garden into the house head downwards. I never saw a live child leave next door. I have seen two small coffins taken away at night carried by a man. A little woman used to come after each confinement (a hunchback) and take away parcels since traced. Hall used to do the washing after confinements, and I have seen him throw lumps out of the clothes to two cats that he kept, and they eat it."

Having now seen what the residents next door have observed, it will be necessary to look into the house, and to do that it will be best to refer to the statements made by the servants employed by Mrs. Hall. . . .

Matilda Barrett, of 15, Thornhill-square, Walworth, the servant who gave evidence at the police court, [was] at Mr. Hall's from January till March 1870, and speaks of two women being confined, and their infants disposed of in the way detailed, viz., one thrown down a hole in the garden by Mr. Hall, the other took away by Mrs. Hall and Waters in a brown paper parcel. At the spot referred to by this girl, there is a hole about three feet deep filled up now with cinder ashes, lime, and a quantity of fatty sort of earth, in which were a great number of small maggots. The last domestic prior to Mrs. Hall's apprehension was her niece, Ellen Maria Crafter, age 13, now living at Greenstead Green, Kent; she was in Mrs. Hall's service for six months in 1870; during that time saw as many as five ladies in the house pregnant at one time. She knew a Mrs. Lester and Mrs. Cutting who were confined, and saw their babies alive the day after their birth; states these infants were taken away by Mrs. Hall, but she has no idea what became of them, as her aunt never told her.

We have here a total of 46 births, and yet between 1st January 1868, and when Mrs. Hall was taken into custody, only eight have been registered, and only in one case has Mrs. Hall been the informant. Having now obtained an insight into the system pursued at this private lying-in house, I will next refer to the females' statements that have been confined at 6, Chapel-place, as to what became of their offspring, and the amounts paid by these various persons for attendance, &c., and to find homes for their infants; to Mrs. Hall.

The earliest date of confinement in which the woman was discovered, relates to a female named Amelia Woodford, now living as housemaid in the family of Sir Benjamin Brodie, Brockham Warren, Reigate, Surrey, but then living at Oxford.

In March 1869 she was confined of a male child at 6, Chapel-place; the infant she had by her two days, when it was taken away by Mrs. Hall, who said "she had sent it to a good home in Gloucestershire"; £20 was paid by this woman to Mary Hall for putting the child out, and £15 for attendance, £7 of which yet remains unpaid. Mrs. Hall promised this poor girl that she would make arrangements for her to see her infant when she wished to, but some months ago wrote to tell her it was dead, but would not satisfy her to who had it, or where it was buried. . . .

The next woman of whom we have any knowledge is a Miss Cope (*alias* Mrs. Cutting), now living with her aunt at the Barley Mow Inn, St. George's-road, Brighton; this person was . . . delivered of a female infant at 6, Chapel-place, on 16th August 1870, at 6 a.m.; the child was taken away at once by Mrs. Hall, who told her she must not see it; but she did see it, but only for a minute. She paid Mrs. Hall £5 to adopt her babe, £19 for attendance, and was to pay her £27 more, making altogether £51. She has no idea what Mrs. Hall has done with her infant. . . .

I will now endeavour to show where infants go to from this lying-in house, and their subsequent fate when removed from the care and the proper food and nourishment of their mothers.

The earliest date of any child being removed from No. 6, Chapel-place to any other house (as far as we can trace) is 1866, then through seeing an advertisement in the "Daily Telegraph" relating to "adoption." Jane Morse, now residing in York House-lane, London-road, Gloucester, wrote to the address mentioned, and soon afterwards saw Mrs. Hall at her house, and received from that person two children; the first, a boy 15 months old, and an infant aged four weeks, and £7 with each; she took them home. The boy died six months after she received him, the latter (a female) is alive now. Also on 2nd March 1868, this baby farmer received from Mrs. Hall another female infant, five days old; that died five months after she had it; £10 was paid with this baby. It appears from the reports of the deputy chief constable of that district, that a medical man attended both the unfortunate children until their death. . . .

## 56. The problem of infant care for French working-class mothers

*In nineteenth-century Paris and other major French cities, working-class women customarily placed their babies for a year or more to board with rural wet nurses so they could continue to supplement the family's income. By*

SOURCES: (i) Letter from the wife of Limoge, of the Hôtel de Ville Quarter (Paris), to the mayor of Beaubray (Eure), March 22, 1834, Archives Com-

1869 it was estimated that about 40 percent of the 55,000 children born in Paris that year were being nursed or cared for by commercial wet nurses in the countryside. An alarming number of these children were never seen again by their parents; the mortality rate among the infants placed by the Paris Municipal Nursing Bureau alone (where careful records were kept) rose above 40 percent in the 1870's.

In the first selection, a Parisian woman writes to the authorities, seeking news of her baby, who had been placed with a wet nurse some sixty miles from Paris. The second selection documents the emotional intensity of the working-class discussion in the 1860's about wet-nursing and child care. Its author, Victorine Brocher (1838-1921), a Parisian shoemaker's wife, was strongly committed to caring for her own son and had grand aspirations for him; despite her attentiveness he died in early childhood.

### (i) Femme Limoge

Pardon me for interrupting you, but you must listen to a mother who is extremely anxious about her child, who was given to a wet nurse named Guille, the wife of Holot, living at Beaubray. She took [the baby] November 18, 1833. She wrote us December 5 that my son was sick with a miliary fever, and since that time I have received no more news of him. I have paid her wages every month at the [Paris Municipal Nursing] Bureau, and she has never acknowledged receiving any money. Would you please, Monsieur, have the goodness to answer me. You will do a great service to a mother who is in the greatest anxiety.

### (ii) Victorine Brocher

How happy I was to be able to care for my dear baby myself! I have struggled a great deal, I have worked a great deal, but my dear angel lacked for nothing. With willpower one finds the strength to accomplish one's duty in life; willpower is a powerful lever that can conquer weakness and make great things happen.

How unhappy I would have been if my baby had been in strange hands. I feel sorry for those mothers who cannot raise their own children, and I blame those who can do so and do not want to; they abdicate the first of their duties, the most sacred imposed on them by nature; they deprive themselves of many pleasures, in fact, the only unselfish ones. If they only knew how much happiness there is for a mother who follows day by day, hour by hour, the development of those dear little beings, so weak, so fragile! It is so satisfying to be on the lookout for their slightest gesture, their slightest transformation. From the first moment the child's dominant instinct is to seek food; he affirms his right to life, that fatal necessity; his vague glance wanders

munales de Beaubray, 5 Q 4, on deposit at the Archives Départementales de l'Eure. The editors wish to thank George Sussman, Delmar, N.Y., for contributing this document and its translation. (ii) Victorine B. . . . [Brocher], *Souvenirs d'une morte vivante* (Paris, 1976), pp. 66-67. Originally published in Lausanne, 1909.

about everything in his environment, seems to seek a point of reference, a protection. He becomes used to objects, to good care, and as soon as his confidence is established, he reaps its benefits; he seems to say thank you with a sweet smile that penetrates to the core of your heart; that smile is something a mother never forgets. The first stammerings, the first sound of his voice surprises him. He is so astonished; he isn't sure that it is he himself who has produced the sound; he practices to make sure. Then come the first steps; how proud he is, the dear little one, when he discovers that he no longer needs help! I remember that when my son was strong enough to walk, only fear slowed him down; I held out a string so he could test his strength; he took it with his little fingers and headed out: as of that instant he was free. He was then fourteen months old and his first falls scared him a little. He fell ten times, twenty times, and then got up: he made it a game; he laughed until tears came. This is the only true happiness I ever tasted. Mothers who deprive themselves of this happiness do not know that it is the greatest happiness in life. How many wonderful dreams I had for my dear child. I wanted him to go to school, to be well brought up; how happy I would have been if one day chance had smiled on me and my son would have become a doctor; of course, I dreamed he would be famous. I taught him to be good to all the wretched poor, who suffer and die for lack of care and money. Or a professor . . . the doctor of thought, who strengthens the brain and creates intelligent men in the true sense of the word, without being pedantic.

Certainly I would never have imagined him as a general. I dreamed he would be good, that is, a man!

**58. Angels rich and poor: Motherhood in France**

The satisfactory performance of the varied tasks of wife and mother, as the nineteenth century defined them, was by no means automatic. Indeed, if the many social critics of the 1830's are to be believed, women of the poorer classes in French society were miserably prepared to discharge their responsibilities toward those whose care was in their charge. Proletarianization had uprooted families from the supporting context of religion, kin, and tradition and had stranded them, faithless and isolated, in impersonal cities, where the most convenient institution was the neighborhood tavern. In the first selection Flora Tristan (1803-44), the first woman to campaign actively for the joint emancipation of women and the proletariat, describes the working-class mother. Tristan was uniquely qualified to comment on this subject; unhappily married to a printer and the reluctant mother of three children, she abandoned her family to spend years investigating the personal and political lives of the French and English working classes.

The second selection shows the angelic mother and Catholicism intact among the privileged classes years after Tristan found them moribund among the workers; it also reveals a new attitude of rational and all-pervasive parental surveillance toward children. This memorandum on child-rearing was written by an unknown female member of a prominent Lille family, the Bernards, who had become wealthy in the manufacture of cotton cloth. The family was deeply Catholic in belief and practice. Evidence suggests that the memorandum was written during the 1850's, and that the young mother died not long afterward, leaving the program she had drafted for her own guidance as a legacy to her children.

will gladly come and play cards with him. But the worker, who is denied all these advantages, has only the company of the women of his family—his fellow sufferers—for his joy and comfort.

This situation strongly points out the extreme importance of giving women a rational and solid education at an early age in order to improve the intellectual, moral, and material condition of the working class. . . .

All working class woes can be summed up in two words: poverty and ignorance; ignorance and poverty. I see only one way to get out of this labyrinth: start by educating women, because women have the responsibility for educating male and female children.

(ii) 'Plan d'éducation d'une mère chrétienne'

My mission with regard to my children is that of a visible Angel, whom God has placed in their midst to help them traverse life. I am the auxiliary of their Guardian Angel, preparing their souls to receive and understand the good thoughts he suggests to them, imprinting these on their fickle imaginations, and helping them to put these into practice. The goal of my mission is to help them reach Heaven. Having given them birth to life on earth, I must now give them birth to grace, a nobler task but a longer, more laborious, and often more painful one. . . .

Good and indulgent for everything childish, I want to be stern concerning every failing. Then I will punish, but calmly and with reflection. To encourage their goodwill, and as a stimulant, I will establish a notebook to record good marks. . . . Good marks will give them the right to choose an article of greater or lesser worth, according to the value of their good points, from a collection of rewards. I will take care to place among these objects several garments for the poor so that they will learn that they can find joy in giving to others. They must be left free to choose or to leave these objects. The act of withholding good marks will be a punishment in itself; in grave circumstances, when more severe punishment is required, being sent to bed without embracing me will be the punishment for such exceptional cases. As they go to nursery school when they are quite young and will be sent to boarding school later, my active part in their schooling does not amount to much. However, in my desire not to be wholly out of touch with it, I will have them recite their lessons to me every day, in order to help them comprehend the meaning, insofar as possible. This is an advantage they will scarcely encounter in class since there are so many children. To this end we will consecrate a few moments, after an amusement of forty-five minutes following dinner. As I will often be with them, I will strive to mold their judgment by teaching them to judge each thing at its true value, and in order to evaluate the results of our conversations, I will sometimes probe the children by allowing them to express their own opinion on certain events. . . . So that I can be with my children when they return from school, I will take care of as many household duties as possible during their absence. I will also avoid all serious work when I am with them, in order to preserve the sweetness and patience that I want to have with them. Advice on defects is far more effective and less wounding to one's pride

when it is given in this context. I will also guard against giving the children any cause for jealousy, which can be a real source of trouble between brothers and sisters. To this end, I will avoid exciting emulation by comparing them with each other; rather I will read them edifying stories, and above all I will seek to make them behave well out of a love of duty. . . . The entire aim of the children's education is to make them understand, love, and practice their duties toward God, toward fellow humans, and toward themselves. While they are still little, I will tell them who created them, what Kingdom they must aspire to, what Jesus Christ did for them, and that in Heaven they also have a good Mother, to whom they were consecrated on the day of their baptism. As a safeguard against evil and a stimulant to goodness, I will make them understand that God sees all, hears all, always, always. . . .

At the age of six, they will begin attending Mass regularly on Sundays; before this age, they will only go occasionally as a reward. At the age of eight, they will be taken to the last part of the vesper service, but only for a short time, so that they become accustomed to it without becoming bored. I will explain to them the reasons for which the various feast days of the year were established and the spirit of the Church during these feast days. According to the solemnity of the feast day, they will take their small active role, whether by going to church, or by reciting a particular prayer for the occasion at home. I will take advantage of all occasions according to circumstances, to excite their confidence, their recognition, their love for God. Preparation for first communion will begin long before the event itself. It will become the prime mover for all good actions, the goal of all small internal combats. Several months before the date of this important occasion, I will send them off to boarding school, so that they may perfect their state of mind.

I will remind them that not only should they have a deep affection for their brothers and sisters, much tenderness, much goodwill, but that these feelings should be extended (in a more general manner, no doubt) to all other men, because in Jesus Christ we are all brothers. That among these brothers, some are God's chosen children, who come first in his heart because of their suffering. For these reasons, these chosen ones should also be of primary concern and sympathy to the children. I will remind them that their own interest is concerned, since they can only enter Heaven by helping these unfortunates. When I am with the little ones, who cannot understand my motives, I will not refuse the requests for alms of those poor souls who are not respectable. A coffer will be placed in the children's chapel, so that they can dispose of their own alms of their own free will, alone without witnesses. The small sums collected in this coffer will be given to a poor person in the neighborhood, possibly in the form of bread or clothing. When the children are bigger, I will sometimes take them, as a reward, to visit a poor household and will try hard to stir up their affection for the children of the poor. From their small savings they will give an annual subscription for the propagation of the faith and for the society of the Holy Childhood, with which they are associated. I will explain the goal to them so they understand that they owe their fellow men more than material alms alone; they must also, according to their capability,



procure spiritual alms for their souls. All haughty and disdainful words will be punished, especially if they are addressed to a domestic servant: the children must then repair the damage they have caused by excusing themselves. . . .

My work, which is a work of each day and every instant, will only be accomplished on the day when, with God's grace, all my children will have become Christians in their hearts. Then I will owe them only the tenderness of my affection. Fortified by the counsel of him whom God has chosen to direct me, I will accomplish my mission with courage, confidence, and perseverance.

### 59. 'To a mother who also cries'

The fear that a child might die colored nineteenth-century motherhood. Infant mortality was high, and in the absence of life-saving drugs and vaccines, even older children were vulnerable to diseases such as scarlet fever, diphtheria, and smallpox. The following selections give a sense of the fragility of life in the Victorian period and show how devastating the loss of children could be. In the first excerpt Mary Botham Howitt (1799-1888), an English Quaker whose ambition was to live by writing, describes to her sister, Anna, the death of her two-year-old son, Charles. Howitt had lost three children at birth, and in the wake of these tragedies, Charles's death was particularly grievous. In the second selection Marceline Desbordes-Valmore (1786-1859), the most famous woman poet of nineteenth-century France, tries to console a friend whose daughter has just died: as a mother who had lost four children of her own, Desbordes-Valmore speaks with the voice of experience. In the third selection Carrie Fries Shaffner (1839-1922), a North Carolina doctor's wife, records in her diary her anguish at her ten-month-old Mary's death. Like many nineteenth-century women, she prayed that her next child might survive.

#### (i) Mary Howitt

April 1828.—How strangely and suddenly are my prospects changed, and my heart covered, as it were, with a thick cloud! I hardly know, my dear Anna, how to write; my thoughts seem tossed. I have much to say on one subject, and yet I almost fear encountering it. Alas! how much sorrow have I known since I last wrote! I have seen our dear little Charles cut off in a moment, in the midst of his childish beauty and winning ways, and, above all, with his heart overflowing with the most remarkable affection.

While in health, he was possessed of exceedingly strong passions and an

SOURCES: (i) Mary Howitt, *Mary Howitt—An Autobiography*, ed. Margaret Howitt (Cambridge, Eng., 1889), 1: 202-4. (ii) Marceline Desbordes-Valmore, "A une Mère qui pleure aussi," in *Les Oeuvres poétiques*, ed. M. Bertrand (Grenoble, 1973), 2: 536. Originally published in 1860. (iii) Carrie Fries Shaffner diary, 1866-67, Fries-Shaffner Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Library of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. The editors are grateful to Ellen Barrier Neal of the SHC for this reference and to Dr. Louis Shaffner, Winston-Salem, N.C., for consenting to its publication.

impatient temper, though, to use a familiar expression, "cut down" in a moment by a word or look of reproof. Two days before the sad event which took him from our care, he became, to our surprise, totally changed. Never was martyr more patient or meekly submissive. My heart runs over with anguish when I recall his obedience in taking the most nauseous medicines almost hourly. Their effect was extremely trying, producing a nervous irritability beyond belief; yet he tried, at our desire, to compose himself, shutting his dear eyes and attempting to sleep, poor little fellow! as if with a desire to soothe us. He was parched with a burning thirst, and for twelve hours, while sleeping and waking, incessantly murmured, "Water, papa!" Dear, ay dearer than the blessed sunshine, as he has been in his health and joyfulness, never was he so dear as in those days of suffering. William was to him the soul of comfort, and the last word he articulated was "Papa!" Oh Anna! I hope thou may be spared the pangs of waking from a dream of confidence and proud hope, from delight in the present and joyful anticipation of the future, to a reality of suffering and death. It is indeed as much as human nature can support.

Thou can hardly imagine how the dear boy has impressed a memory on almost everything, and months must pass before we are restored to a quiet state of acquiescence with our loss. We miss his merry shouts and bursts of laughter, his vehement joy, which contrasted so much with his sister's [Anna Mary] quietness, his arch and mischievous little tricks, that kept us in a continual state of activity. Then his joy when he heard William's step, which he knew at any audible distance, and his actual scream of delight when papa promised him a walk. I wish thou had heard his voice, so loud, rich, and deep, always reminding me of the silver tone of a bell. Could thou but have heard him, in his merry health, singing to himself while he twirled round a bit of string or stick for a hand-organ, or played the little organ thou sent him, thou would have thought, as I often did, it was a voice which surpassed all music. It was a lovely sight to watch him and Anna Mary together, forming such a contrast. Dear, dear children, they have been my jewels, proudly worn and prized. Poor Anna Mary will miss him too. He was her man Friday, when for day after day she has acted Robinson Crusoe. It was wonderful to me to think how, at two years of age, he could comprehend the character; he marched about with a hearth-brush on his shoulder, pretending to shoot different things for game, sat down by Anna Mary and did as she bid him, like Friday himself. Then he has walked with two sticks, pretending to be an old lame man. His merry antics have amused me as much almost as they have him. Our house seems silent and forlorn, and there is a void in my heart, which no other child can ever fill.

Though, dear Anna, I have spoken yet only of sorrowful memories, I must not ungratefully forget the mercy which has been mingled with judgment. Never before—and my heart is full in writing it—never did I know the value of many a blessed promise in Scripture. From the pleasant books, in which, in the sunshine of my security, I took such delight, I have turned with distaste, and found in the beautiful and assuring words of Christ comfort and hope;

and dear Anna, without affectation, I can truly say, were the power to recall the dear boy given us, we would not do it. The blow has been a severe one; but there are some things that call for thankfulness in it, and assure me that there was a sparing and a merciful hand under all, so that I hope it may tend to our good, and not lightly be forgotten.

(ii) Marceline Desbordes-Valmore

“To a Mother Who Also Cries”

Who knows if the child who lives in your tears,  
The child whose young charms still feed in your heart  
(Lone heart that protects her from being forgotten),  
Has not met my child at the threshold of God?

Who knows if their hands, joined for a moment,  
Have not weighed in heaven our infinite pain,  
And crying with love unique to that sphere,  
Have numbered our tears as an offering to God?

Seeing you, Madame, at least I know this:  
Tidings of comfort have entered my soul,  
As if my dear child, in her loving power,  
For my endless grief has sent me a sister.

If that be His will, then His will be done!  
Nothing will alter the course of our fate—  
But from the love-grief that brought us together,  
Let us learn it is sweet not to forget.

~~[The following entry was recorded nine months later.]~~

~~Sept. 19, 1867.—With the deepest gratitude we receive this second gift from our Heavenly Father & pray that he may permit us to keep it longer than the other. In wisdom He ordereth all things & so His holy will we will endeavor to submit patiently.~~

### 60. Mme Dudevant sues for legal separation from her husband

In 1835 *Amantine-Lucile-Aurore Dupin, baronne Dudevant* (George Sand, 1804-76; Docs. 26.i, 100), filed for a legal separation from her husband of thirteen years. This was the sole recourse open to a French woman or man who was unhappily married, since civil divorce had been outlawed in 1816; remarriage was, of course, impossible. This particular suit, however, was the subject of unusual public interest throughout France and abroad, since the plaintiff had recently gained world fame for her novels 'Indiana,' 'Jacques,' and 'Lélia,' and for her public flouting of social convention.

The first section offers a glimpse of early steps in the separation procedure, including a tentative agreement concerning child custody and property arrangements. The second section gives excerpts from witnesses' testimony at the final hearing, in January 1836, and concludes with the court's decision to grant the separation. In deciding the case in favor of Sand, the judges express their contempt for the husband who "permits his wife to live alone," implying that a man who abandons his marital authority in such fashion surely deserves what he gets.

[Resumé of the case, October-December 1835]

Oct. 30—Madame Dudevant presents a petition to M. the President of the Tribunal of La Châtre for authorization to file a claim for bodily separation from her husband.

Nov. 2—Pre-settlement hearing. M. Dudevant failed to appear.

Nov. 12.—M. Dudevant, understanding that he cannot contest his wife's claim, stipulates his personal and pecuniary interests in the following articles. . . .

Article 1: Madame Dudevant resumes the administration and use of all her goods, furnishings, and properties.

Article 2: M. Dudevant will return to Madame . . . the various buildings acquired during their marriage. . . .

Article 8: M. Dudevant, in addition to the assets and personal effects that are his own, and whose ownership and enjoyment he will preserve, will receive annually from Madame Dudevant the sum of 3,800 francs; this sum will be paid him in four equal parts, on the 1st of January, 1st of April, 1st of July,

SOURCE: *Précis pour Madame Dudevant, intimée; contre M. Dudevant, appellant*, May 3, 1836, George Sand Papers no. 760, Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris.

and 1st of October of each year. . . . Madame Dudevant will retain sole responsibility for the costs of educating and supporting Maurice and Solange, children born of the marriage.

Madame Dudevant will have free disposition of the education of Solange. She may leave her in the boarding school she presently attends, or she may remove her from it, either to place her in another or to keep her with her, according to her own wishes, without M. Dudevant placing any obstacles in her way—this he solemnly declares. He will in any case be free to see Solange as often as he likes, and Madame Dudevant promises to send her to him or to take her to him whenever he notifies her of his intention to spend the day with Solange.

As for Maurice, he will be left as a boarder in one of the *collèges* in Paris until his education is complete. He will spend his vacations and his holidays half with his father and half with his mother, or, in their absence, with whoever is chosen by either parent during the time he or she would have had custody of the child. . . .

Article 10: When the time comes to provide for the establishment of the said children, M. and Madame Dudevant, once they have reached agreement about the composition of the doweries and other advantages to be provided for the children, will each contribute thereto in proportion to their respective incomes. . . .

Made in duplicate at La Châtre, under the private seals of the two parties, November 12, 1835.

[Excerpts from the final hearing, January 1836]

First witness, Antoine André Bonphilippe (35 years old), gardener at La Châtre, deposes:

"I don't know if M. Dudevant has insulted or maltreated his wife; I only know that the girl called Claire told me several times at my place that her pregnancy was the work of M. Dudevant; the first time (she had just come back from Paris), I noticed that she was pregnant and teased her about it; she confessed as much to me; she was still in the service of Madame Chatiron. Another time, after giving birth, she came here with her daughter with the intention of presenting her to M. Dudevant; she was lodging with one M. Aubourg; she had me write a letter to M. Dudevant urging him to come to see her, but I don't think he came. She left the next day for Boussac, very annoyed. When I went afterwards to Boussac, the girl Claire often spoke to me of M. Dudevant and, showing me her daughter, told me she looked like him, and pointed out her eyes in particular as being similar to M. Dudevant's." He adds: "The girl Claire made the same confessions in front of Pierre Moreau, gardener at Nohant, in my presence, and Moreau told me that she had said the same to him several times."

Second witness, Pierre-Louis-Alphonse Fleury, lawyer at La Châtre, deposes:

"In 1827, I think, in the month of September, I took a trip along the

banks of the Creuse with M. and Madame Dudevant and several other persons; we had arrived near Château-Brun; as we were taking the horses out of the stable to return home, M. Dudevant struck his horse on the head with several blows of his whip. When his wife made several remarks to him about how he was hitting the animal, he responded impatiently: 'It suits me to hit him, and if you continue your remarks, I'll give you the same.' Madame Dudevant withdrew without saying anything.

"For the five or six years that I have had continued relations with M. and Madame Dudevant, I've been witness to the brusque manner and caustic words M. Dudevant used with his wife. Whenever his wife wanted to take part in any discussion, he would shrug his shoulders, show his disdain for whatever she said, and add that she didn't have any common sense, that she only uttered nonsense, that she was mad. I remember, among other things, that in 1834, after Madame Dudevant's return from her trip to Italy, when I was one day at Nohant with M. Duvernet, the conversation during dinner turned to this trip. Madame Dudevant spoke of the fertility of the Italian soil, and especially of the plains that produced several harvests. M. Dudevant, after some discussion, replied that it wasn't true, that it was all lies, that she spoke like all scribblers who speak without seeing. The tone in which M. Dudevant pronounced these words revealed his intention to annoy his wife. We were very embarrassed by that scene.

"The same year, at the end of autumn, I was dining at Nohant with some other people; a bottle of champagne was upset by one of the guests. Madame Dudevant called for another from the servant, and M. Dudevant forbade the servant to obey his wife. I don't remember if he added that no order was to be received except from him; but he said that several times in my presence, under other circumstances."

Fourth witness, Jeanne-Marie-Rose Petit (28 years old), wife of Joseph Bourgoûin, tax collector at La Châtre, deposes:

"... On the evening of [October 19], we were having coffee in the salon. Madame Dudevant's son asked for some cream. 'There isn't any more,' his father said. 'Go to the kitchen; just get out of here.' The child, instead of leaving, took refuge next to his mother. M. Dudevant insisted again that he should leave, and then Madame Dudevant herself said, 'Leave, since your father desires it.' An altercation arose between Madame and Monsieur—very calm on her part and very fiery on his. He went so far as to say to his wife, 'You get out too!' That's what he ordered several times. Madame Dudevant responded that she was in her own home, and that she intended to remain. After she asked her husband to declare what he would do if she didn't leave, he said: 'To begin with, I'll give you a h--- of a slap'; then he got up and approached Madame as if to slap her; he was prevented from doing so by the people present, who stood between them. . . . Unable to reach his wife, he retreated toward the door, uttering threats. To the gentlemen who followed him, he said: 'We'll see who's the master here.' I was told afterwards that he had gone to get his rifle; I thought he was going to get the servants. M. Dude-

vant returned to the salon, and a few minutes later Madame withdrew to her rooms."

Thirteenth witness, Catherine Mathelin (25 years old), washerwoman residing in Boussac, deposes:

"During the year and a half that I was in the service of Madame Chatiron, both in Paris and at Nohant, I didn't notice M. Dudevant mistreating or insulting his wife."

Asked if she had had relations with M. Dudevant and if the child to whom she had given birth could have resulted from these relations, she replied that she was not obliged to declare who the father of the child was, that it was perhaps he, perhaps another.

Asked if she had not said, either to André, called Bonphilippe, or to Pierre Moreau, gardener at Nohant, or to Madame Gilbert that M. Dudevant was the father of her child, she answered "No."

Asked if she had not said to André, called Bonphilippe, and to other persons that her child resembled M. Dudevant, she answered: "If I said it, since I wasn't in confession, I wasn't obliged to tell the truth, as I am obliged to tell it here. About two years ago, during vacation, I saw M. Dudevant and his son at Boussac, taking a walk with M. the subprefect and some other people; but I didn't speak to him or make him speak to me, although I went to the subprefecture after I had seen him."

Asked again if the child to whom she had given birth could have been fathered by M. Dudevant, she persisted in her first statement, saying that it could be his or another's.

#### Opinion

The undersigned Council members, who have read 1) the charges presented by Madame Dudevant to M. the President of the Tribunal of La Châtre on the 21st of last November; 2) the petition signed by the respondent's solicitor and served on the 14th of April, judge, on the basis of this petition, and without considering it necessary to pronounce judgment on the hearings that have taken place and without initiating new ones, that a separation should be granted. . . .

Society cannot allow a husband who is not the plaintiff to have the right, on the occasion of a suit brought against him, to cover with shame—and what shame! and what intolerable outrage!—a woman whom he should protect, if he himself has not taken the initiative in calling down on her the wrath of the law. Of course, one understands that a husband who, like M. Dudevant, permits his wife to live alone, far from him, in the capital, for several months of the year, *has disqualified himself from presenting the sole demand that could justify the language he is using today*; but then, such a man must accept the situation he has created for himself and not give vent to charges which, separated from the conclusion of Article 229 of the Civil Code, are nothing more than an insult of the highest order.

### 61. An indissoluble sacrament: Separation and divorce in England

In the first half of the nineteenth century an Englishwoman who found herself unhappily married—like her French counterpart—had virtually no chance of ending her marriage. Separations, granted by ecclesiastical courts, were almost unknown, and divorces could be obtained only by a private act of Parliament at the high cost of £800–£900. In theory either husband or wife could petition for divorce, but in practice only 3 percent of the actions were initiated by wives.

Caroline Sheridan Norton (1808–77), from whose writings the first selection is taken, played a leading role in the agitation to reform the divorce laws and make them more equitable to women. Granddaughter of Richard Brinsley Sheridan and a successful author in her own right, she married the Hon. George Norton in 1828. The marriage proved disastrous, and in 1836, after many violent scenes and quarrels, George accused his wife of adultery with the Prime Minister. Although she was judged innocent, Caroline's reputation was permanently tarnished. Separated from her husband, she was denied access to their three children; meanwhile, he took legal action to obtain the proceeds from her writings. These tribulations left Caroline bitterly conscious of the inferior legal status of married women and led her to condemn publicly the laws regarding divorce and child custody. In 1857, prodded by her protest and the activities of other feminists, Parliament passed the Matrimonial Causes Act, which established special civil courts to grant judicial separations and divorces. Frances Kelly, a minister's wife whose story is told in the second selection, benefited from this act; had it not been for this reform, she could never have escaped the control of the vindictive Reverend Kelly.

#### (i) Caroline Norton

A married woman in England has *no legal existence*: her being is absorbed in that of her husband. Years of separation or desertion cannot alter this position. Unless divorced by special enactment in the House of Lords, the legal fiction holds her to be "one" with her husband, even though she may never see or hear of him.

She has no possessions, unless by special settlement; her property is *his* property. . . .

An English wife has no legal right even to her clothes or ornaments; her husband may take them and sell them if he pleases, even though they be the gifts of relatives or friends, or bought before marriage.

An English wife cannot make a will. She may have children or kindred whom she may earnestly desire to benefit;—she may be separated from her husband, who may be living with a mistress; no matter: the law gives what she has to him, and no will she could make would be valid.

An English wife cannot legally claim her own earnings. Whether wages

SOURCES: (i) Caroline Norton, *A Letter to the Queen on Lord Chancellor Cranworth's Marriage and Divorce Bill* (London, 1855), pp. 8–13. (ii) Great Britain, *Law Reports, Courts of Probate and Divorce*, 33–55 Vict., 1869–72, II: 31–38.

for manual labour, or payment for intellectual exertion, whether she weed potatoes, or keep a school, her salary is *the husband's*; and he could compel a second payment, and treat the first as void, if paid to the wife without his sanction.

An English wife may not leave her husband's house. Not only can he sue her for "restitution of conjugal rights," but he has a right to enter the house of any friend or relation with whom she may take refuge, and who may "harbour her,"—as it is termed,—and carry her away by force, with or without the aid of the police.

If the wife sue for separation for cruelty, it must be "cruelty that endangers life or limb," and if she has once forgiven, or, in legal phrase, "*condoned*" his offenses, she cannot plead them; though her past forgiveness only proves that she endured as long as endurance was possible.

If her husband take proceedings for a divorce, she is not, in the first instance, allowed to defend herself. She has no means of proving the falsehood of his allegations. She is not represented by attorney, nor permitted to be considered a party to the suit between him and her supposed lover, for "damages." . . .

If an English wife be guilty of infidelity, her husband can divorce *her* so as to marry again; but she cannot divorce the husband, *a vinculo*, however profligate he may be. No law court can divorce in England. A special Act of Parliament annulling the marriage is passed for each case. The House of Lords grants this almost as a matter of course to the husband, but not to the wife. In only four instances (two of which were cases of incest) has the wife obtained a divorce to marry again.

She cannot prosecute for a libel. Her husband must prosecute; and in cases of enmity and separation, of course she is without a remedy. . . .

She cannot claim support, as a matter of personal right, from her husband. The general belief and nominal rule is, that her husband is "bound to maintain her." That is not the law. He is not bound to *her*. He is bound to his country; bound to see that she does not cumber the parish in which she resides. If it be proved that means sufficient are at her disposal, from relatives or friends, her husband is quit of his obligation, and need not contribute a farthing: even if he have deserted her; or be in receipt of money which is hers by inheritance. . . .

Separation from her husband by consent, or for his ill usage, does not alter their mutual relation. He retains the right to divorce her *after* separation,—as before,—though he himself be unfaithful.

Her being, on the other hand, of spotless character, and without reproach, gives her no advantage in law. She may have withdrawn from his roof knowing that he lives with "his faithful housekeeper": having suffered personal violence at his hands; having "*condoned*" much, and being able to prove it by unimpeachable testimony: or he may have shut the doors of her house against her: all this is quite immaterial: the law takes no cognisance of which is to blame. As *her husband*, he has a right to all that is hers: as *his wife*, she has no right to anything that is his. As her husband, he may divorce her

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(if truth or false swearing can do it): as his wife, the utmost "divorce" she could obtain, is permission to reside alone,—married to his name. The marriage ceremony is a civil bond for him,—and an indissoluble sacrament for her; and the rights of mutual property which that ceremony is ignorantly supposed to confer, are made absolute for him, and null for her.

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*Prepared under the auspices of the Center for Research on Women  
at Stanford University*

# Victorian Women

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AND THE UNITED STATES

STANFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

STANFORD, CALIFORNIA

1981

