

Woman.

Mothers and Wives and Housekeepers, forsooth! Great names! you cry, full scope to rule and please! Room for wise age and energetic youth! —But are you these?

Housekeepers? Do you then, like those of yore, Keep house with power and pride, with grace and ease? No, you keep servants only! What is more, You don't keep these!

Wives, say you? Wives! Blessed indeed are they Who hold of love the everlasting keys, Keeping their husbands' hearts! Alas the day! You don't keep these!

And mothers? Pitying Heaven! Mark the cry From cradle death-beds! Mothers on their knees! Why, half the children born — as children die! You don't keep these!

And still the wailing babies come and go, And homes are waste, and husbands' hearts fly far, There is no hope until you dare to know The thing you are!

To the Young Wife

Are you content, you pretty three-years' wife? Are you content and satisfied to live On what your loving husband loves to give, And give to him your life?

9 129

Are you content with work, — to toil alone, To clean things dirty and to soil things clean; To be a kitchen-maid, be called a queen, — Queen of a cook-stove throne?

Are you content to reign in that small space — A wooden palace and a yard-fenced land — With other queens abundant on each hand, Each fastened in her place?

Are you content to rear your children so? Untaught yourself, untrained, perplexed, distressed, Are you so sure your way is always best? That you can always know?

Have you forgotten how you used to long in days of ardent girlhood, to be great, To help the groaning world, to serve the state, To be so wise — so strong?

And are you quite convinced this is the way, The only way a woman's duty lies — Knowing all women so have shut their eyes? Seeing the world to-day?

Have you no dream of life in fuller store? Of growing to be more than that you are? Doing the things you now do better far, Yet doing others — more?

130

Losing no love, but finding as you grew That as you entered upon nobler life You so became a richer, sweeter wife, A wiser mother too?

What holds you? Ah, my dear, it is your throne, Your paltry queenship in that narrow place, Your antique labors, your restricted space, Your working all alone!

Be not deceived! 'Tis not your wifely bond That holds you, nor the mother's royal power, But selfish, slavish service hour by hour —A life with no beyond!

False Play

“Do you love me?” asked the mother of her child, And the baby answered, “No!” Great Love listened and sadly smiled; He knew the love in the heart of the child —That you could not wake it so.

“Do not love me?” the foolish mother cried, And the baby answered, “No!” He knew the worth of the trick she tried — Great Love listened, and grieving, sighed That the mother scorned him so.

131