

THE ETERNAL FEMININE

By Helene Wood

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"Elizabeth, the eternal feminine will assert itself."

Elizabeth put on her long blue painting apron without replying and began to stretch a canvas. She was adorable so, her gray eyes defiantly averted and a flush of anger on her cheeks.

"There you go again. If I don't know my own mind at twenty-six when will I?"

"At twenty-seven or eight perhaps. I hope sooner. Your ideas are all wrong. Believe me, the day will come when you will long for a home of your own and some one nearer than a girl friend or masculine admirer."

He had the last word, for the arrival of the model, a thin, shabby looking girl, put an end to the discussion. "Tomorrow at 5, then?"

Elizabeth gave a brisk little nod. She was already sketching in the outlines of her study, and Phil was forgotten before he had closed the door.

The young man was quite accustomed to such treatment. Admitted as he was to her most intimate friendship on an understanding of strict camaraderie, he broke over the traces every year, was invariably refused and bore his defeat with easy affront. Some day she was bound to change her mind, and he might be the lucky man.

Elizabeth's own opinion was very different. She had no time for thought until her work was laid aside for the day. Then she sank into a nest of cushions to think luxuriously.

No, Phil was wrong. She would never care to leave her studio—above all, to marry. Had not the art school girls who married ceased developing intellectually? Shut up in their own four walls, they became entirely absorbed in dear Tom or Dick and the children. Children! Elizabeth shuddered. A child in a book or picture was very delightful, but the reality, a dirty little creature always crying or being ill! She would never leave her work, her studies, her pleasures, for a deadly stupid family life. Never!

A cry of warning. The trolley car stopped with a lurch. In an instant the conductor and motorman were down in the street, followed by most of the passengers. Elizabeth, impatient at the delay, resolved to walk the block or two remaining. Her model would be waiting for her at the studio.

When she left the car she found herself the only woman in a large group collected about a sickening black mass which had splashed car wheels and cobblestones with blood. The conductor, a good natured looking young Irishman, stood with tears rolling down his face. He was holding a golden haired baby, a toddler of a year or two. The motorman, white and frightened, was telling how the baby had suddenly run in front of the car and the mother had thrown the little one out of the way, only to be crushed herself.

The child began to cry, and the conductor turned to Elizabeth imploringly. "You take the baby, mum. The ambulance is comin'. The cops will be after findin' its relatives."

Before she could reply he had put the baby in her unresisting arms.

Some moments later, hardly knowing how it had all happened, she found herself walking into her studio building carrying a little child. In her purse was a bit of paper inscribed "19 Plumley alley." It was the poor woman's address, to which she had promised to take him. A man she knew, who was passing along the corridor, smiled and remarked, "Rather a small model, Miss Blair." Elizabeth flushed as if she had committed a crime and was relieved to close the studio door behind her.

Then she put down her burden and looked at her watch. Ten o'clock! The model had come and gone. No hope now. She herself would have to take the child home. A short conference at the phone told her the whereabouts of Plumley alley, eight squares south and just off the —th street car line.

When she left the phone she found the little one standing close by. Elizabeth studied him with half shut eyes.

"Not bad," she thought—"a Donatello, if the forehead were a little higher and the curls not so fine and tight. How I should like to paint him! Come here, little one. What's your name?"

"Alan Campbell naughty."

"Are you naughty?"

"Es. I want my muvver."

His mother! Elizabeth felt a quick pang of horror. "Come here, and I will show you something really."

She held out her watch. The silver and gold ornaments on its long chain jingled attractively. Alan Campbell slowly drew near the shining object. He seized it just as a little stray dog would have done a bit of cake—seized it and walked away. Then Elizabeth brought out pictures. It was surprising how quickly they were friends, sitting on the floor side by side looking at "pussies" and "doggies."

It was after 11 when Alan Campbell's face began to look doleful.

"I want a cup of millik," he announced.

There were a pitcher of cream, some biscuits and a glass of jelly in her stock of tea table provisions. With this luncheon spread out before him, Alan Campbell was soon installed on the edge of the model stand.

When he had drunk all the cream except that which soaked into her pretty rug, when his face was gory with currant jelly, and biscuits had lost their attraction, Elizabeth took one sticky little hand in hers and led him firmly to the washstand. After he was clean and dry she sank into a chair, exhausted.

"I want up on 'ap," cried a little voice appealingly.

She drew him up. For awhile he was amused by her velvet blouse; then his eyes began to close. Alan Campbell's head was on Elizabeth's shoulder. His right hand clasped hers tightly. He was fast asleep.

Elizabeth had the true artistic nature which when it feels does so with abandon. The soft little body in her arms, the warm, sweet breath on her face, touched the very depths of her heart. Never in her life had she felt so strangely happy—happy and yet troubled. She was embarrassed before her own emotions and bent her head, clasping him more tightly. The world thought of her as a woman. She had a womanly poise and a strong character, but her heart, a girl's heart, could not understand this awakening of mysterious instincts, the motherhood beneath her culture and ambition and stronger than both. The flying moments, her beloved work, everything was forgotten as she held the sleeping child.

A half hour passed, an hour. Alan Campbell suddenly opened a pair of questioning blue eyes. Startled by the strange face, he cried: "Where's my muvver? I want my muvver!" His little body shook with sobs.

Rudely aroused from her dream, Elizabeth felt a quick pang of jealousy. Yes, she was jealous of the woman whose hold on the child even death was powerless to break. Silently she put on her wraps, gathered Alan Campbell, sobs and all, into her arms and hurried down to the —th street cars.

Plumley alley proved to be a neat flagged court and No. 19 a tiny white house with green shutters. A little old man, whose eyes were swollen with weeping, came to answer her ring. Alan Campbell called "Huddo Grampy." The poor old fellow tried in vain to control his grief. The girl shook the trembling old hand and turned away, unable to express her sympathy. Alan Campbell smiled after her like a sunbeam.

Elizabeth closed her studio door with a shiver. Never had it looked more beautiful, more orderly or more cold and still.

"I want my muvver," a little voice kept sounding in her ear. Ah, these mothers she had been pitying, how she envied them now! It was ridiculous to feel so, and yet, and yet she knew her arms would always be empty and her whole body hungry for the presence, the caresses of a little child, something of her own, her very own, to love.

There was hardly time to arrange her hair and light the spirit lamp before Phil knocked. Hoping that he would not notice her red eyelids, she concentrated her attention on the tea things. She thought she was succeeding until Phil said, "What's up, Elizabeth?"

"Oh," she replied, "I saw a frightful accident this morning. I can't seem to forget it." Tears rolled down her cheeks.

Phil longed to take the sensitive girl into his arms, but he only said cheerfully:

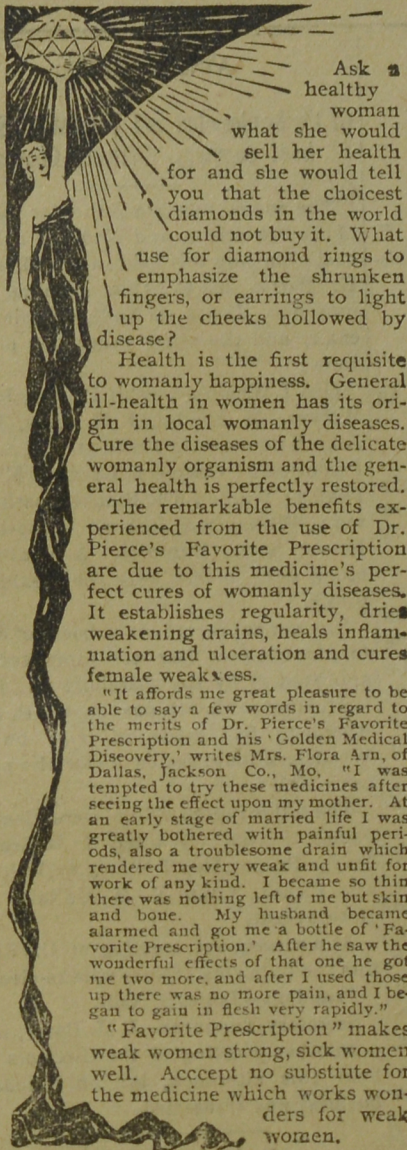
"There are many cruel things in this world. We can't help them. Try to forget all this. Put on your hat and come out to dinner with me. I'll tell you what—we'll go and see Wilson in 'The Matador'; make you laugh; do you good."

She only sobbed.

Phil knelt beside her chair and took her hand.

"Please don't cry. It hurts me to see it."

It was very un-Elizabeth-like, but somehow she let her head droop on his shoulder and closed her eyes, as Alan Campbell had done. It was so good to feel some one near, some one who was strong and who loved her. Phil could not understand, but was grateful for the miracle which had made the girl he loved seek his arms like a child. He spoke low and tenderly.



Ask a healthy woman

what she would sell her health for and she would tell you that the choicest diamonds in the world could not buy it. What use for diamond shrunk fingers, or earrings to light up the cheeks hollowed by disease?

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"Dear, won't you let me be your consolation always?"

He bent his head to her tear stained cheek and her little word of reply was not so loud as the glad beating of his heart.

"Only," said Elizabeth, when she had recovered something of her usual spirit, "don't flatter yourself it was your conquest. It was nothing at all but the eternal feminine."

The Independent Cat.

"There is nothing I admire in a cat so much as her absolute independence," said a man as he watched a big Angora sweep haughtily around the room. "You are bound to treat a cat kindly. If you abuse her or ill treat her she cares nothing more for you. Now, a dog will lick the hand that beats him, but a cat will have only the utmost contempt for you. This tendency of a dog to love its master even after it has been kicked may appeal to some, but I like the cat's high, proud spirit better. This independent spirit of the cat crops out in many ways. You may slap her for stealing milk, but the next time she gets a chance she will steal milk. She will appropriate the best chair in the room and endure with a supercilious air your polite hints or stern commands to her to get down. But she will never budge until the spirit moves her or you remove her by force. If she is crazy to get in the window and you open it for her, she takes her time, stops to sniff a bit and does not allow you to think for one instant that she was at all concerned over the opening of that window. They are beautiful animals, and they know it, and if you don't like them they don't care a hang."—New York Times.

The Baby Humorists.

"Of course," said Mrs. Extrygood, "you are fond of bright, precocious babies?"

"Oh, yes; certainly," replied old Batch, "but I draw the line on the supposed smart sayings made up by the parents and loaded off on the poor infants."—Baltimore American.

Not a Characteristic.

"That was your wife with you at the railway station, wasn't it?"

"What makes you think it was my wife?"

"Well, she gave you such a short answer."

"That wasn't my wife."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

All Will Be Disccovered.

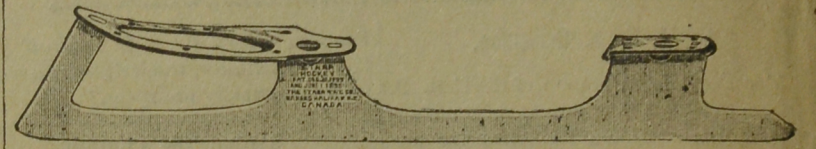
Barnes Torner—I am in a quandary. I have been offered an engagement by two managers, and I don't know how to act.

Sue Brette—Well, don't worry. They'll soon find it out.—New York Times.

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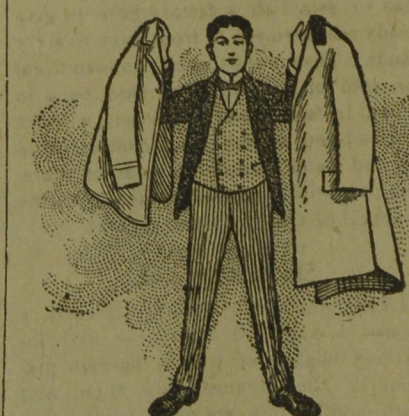
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