

After all, this profession or business of the woman is fundamentally that of civilization. There seems to be no urgent reason why man, left to himself, that is if we can conceive him as being what he now is and living in a world without wife or child, should have any particular interest in civilization. Why he should tie himself down to a completely artificial scheme which hampers his natural instincts on every side is not clear. Civilization has always seemed to me for a man an entirely acquired taste. There are many evidences to show that if left entirely to himself he reverts into some form either of savagery or sloth. I never am obliged to walk through the smoking car of a train to get a seat that I do not make this reflection.

The woman and the child, however, compel man to some form of civilization. The woman for the sake of the family holds him to this. If we could visualize the course of civilization, this would be clear. Few of us, however, ever have an opportunity to get very close to a society in which civilization is forming. We see the results of all the past centuries, men and women and children living side by side in the kind of society that has been worked out. I once had the opportunity, however, to study for a brief time a little community which was working on a plan very different from any that I had ever seen. It was a community in which the work of civilization was practically all on the shoulders of the women. If the institutions, the conventions, the morality of civilization was to be kept, it was perfectly obvious to any observer the women must do it. This community was that of the fishing folk in the North West corner of France, the people Pierre Loti talks of in his Iceland Fishermen. Through six or sometimes more months of the year all of the men, except t

the very old, the very young and the incapable are gone in Iceland waters on fishing excursions. There are few more dangerous or desperately hard trades plied in the world today than that of these fishermen. There are few groups of men ~~whom~~ in whose industry such a death toll is yearly exacted. The women know this, and back in Brittany they keep as trim and thrifty little homes going as I have ever seen in my life. It is they who rule the household, see that the children are disciplined and educated; it is they who plant the gardens and take care of the horse or mule and cow that every household boasts. As the spring and summer come on and it is time for the fishing boats to return these women who for months have held the fort begin to watch from the headlands of that wildly picturesque and terribly dangerous coast for the incoming boats; and always there are some that never come back. When the boats come, you will find them at the dock, with a little two-wheeled cart, ready to take home their man and his belongings; and now comes in one of the most difficult and best-done tasks of these women. For consider the reaction upon a man who for six or eight months has been engaged in the deadly toil and the not less deadly danger of this fishing life. He comes back for rest and recuperation. Everyone acknowledged his right now to pleasure and to idleness. The natural thing is for the man to do more or less carousing. He has been for months in this wild life; the strain is broken. If he is to be held to any kind of regular and temperate living, it is the woman that must do it; and I never in my life have seen women tackle a human problem with more dignity and honor and more patience than these women tackle the problem of holding these men to civilization. Without ~~which~~ their understanding and their fine

fine handling of these men, these little fishing communities would be during the period that the men are at home, wild and dangerous places, Instead of that, they are among the most - delightful places that I in my life have visited. It is the women making civilization, forcing it for the sake of the child and her family that one sees in Brittany.

And what is done there, women did in all of the earlier periods in every country. There always is a period in the life of a young nation when the man was away on some occupation, when the man was called away by war or by occupations which took him from the immediate home and where, if things were to be held together in civilized form, it must be done by the women. What the women are doing in Europe today is a form of this thing. We hear many people saying that the whole industrial life of the world is to be changed because women under the stress of the present war have been driven into industry and agriculture. But what women are doing in France, England and Germany today they have done in every war since the world began. We talk of their making munitions, but my grandmother and your grandmother in the war of the Revolution made ammunition from the and even melted her beloved pewter to make bullets. The women of the Confederacy in the Civil War gathered from the battle fields lead and bullets and recast them for their men. Women have always carried on the shops, the agriculture, the various activities of the country in great wars. It is the scale on which things are being presently carried on that makes the business of women more impressive to the world; but it does not differ in character from what the world has always seen.