



The Gentlewoman in Society

Lady Violet Greville

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CHAPTER XVIII. THE IDEAL WOMAN. E have seen that Society in the great world "of London is intoxicating and exciting; that the pulse of a great unrest beats in its midst; that, to use the words of a clever writer, "its pleasures are quickly followed by depression, and its passions become a dram-drinking which steals away time and force and contentment from any one who becomes famous in it. It saps his energies, it debilitates his imagination, it fritters away his time, it makes a plaything of his power." We have seen that the race for amusement and the forces of toil and play increase in speed and complexity daily; that birth and position do not suffice of themselves to bear the man and woman safely to the goal of success; that the present generation is restless and impatient of control, refusing to endure the pressure of dulness under which their forefathers patiently stagnated; tha.t in their own fashion they manage to accomplish much; that new channels of energy and movement are widening out daily; and that life, if more bitter, more disappointing, more agitated, and, perhaps, more mercenary, is also fuller and more exciting. With the new order of things, our ideals shift and change also; and the ideal woman of the present time differs greatly from that of preceding generations. Our grandmothers, somewhat austere ladies, firm in principle and decided in their monarchical and religious views, travelled little, but when they did, they accomplished their journeys courageously on horseback, or sitting bolt upright in the family coach, as it jolted and jogged over the rugged and uneven road, sinking into quicksands at one moment and becoming embedded in snow at another. They rose early, and read family prayers to the assembled servants; they rejoiced in entire...

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