

“The Angel in the House”, Coventry Patmore (1854)

Man must be pleased; but him to please
Is woman's pleasure; down the gulf
Of his condoled necessities
She casts her best, she flings herself.
How often flings for nought, and yokes
Her heart to an icicle or whim,
Whose each impatient word provokes
Another, not from her, but him;
While she, too gentle even to force
His penitence by kind replies,
Waits by, expecting his remorse,
With pardon in her pitying eyes;
And if he once, by shame oppress'd,
A comfortable word confers,
She leans and weeps against his breast,
And seems to think the sin was hers;
Or any eye to see her charms,
At any time, she's still his wife,
Dearly devoted to his arms;
She loves with love that cannot tire;
And when, ah woe, she loves alone,
Through passionate duty love springs higher,
As grass grows taller round a stone.

North and South, Elizabeth Gaskell (1854): Extract from Chapter 24

Mr. Thornton stood by one of the windows, with his back to the door, apparently absorbed in watching something in the street. But, in truth, he was afraid of himself. His heart beat thick at the thought of her coming. He could not forget the touch of her arms around his neck, impatiently felt as it had been at the time; but now the recollection of her clinging defence of him, seemed to thrill him through and through,—to melt away every resolution, all power of self-control, as if it were wax before a fire. He dreaded lest he should go forwards to meet her, with his arms held out in mute entreaty that she would come and nestle there, as she had done, all unheeded, the day before, but never unheeded again. His heart throbbed loud and quick. Strong man as he was, he trembled at the anticipation of what he had to say, and how it might be received. She might droop, and flush, and flutter to his arms, as to her natural home and resting-place. One moment, he glowed with impatience at the thought that she might do this, the next, he feared a passionate rejection, the very idea of which withered up his future with so deadly a blight that he refused to think of it. He was startled by the sense of the presence of some one else in the room. He turned round. She had come in so gently, that he had never heard her; the street noises had been more distinct to his inattentive ear than her slow movements, in her soft muslin gown.

She stood by the table, not offering to sit down. Her eyelids were dropped half over her eyes; her teeth were shut, not compressed; her lips were just parted over them, allowing the white line to be seen between their curve. Her slow deep breathings dilated her thin and beautiful nostrils; it was the only motion visible on her countenance. The fine-grained skin, the oval cheek, the rich outline of her mouth, its corners deep set in dimples,—were all wan and pale to-day; the loss of their usual natural healthy colour being made more evident by the heavy shadow of the dark hair, brought down upon the temples, to hide all sign of the blow she had received. Her head, for all its drooping eyes, was thrown a little back, in the old proud attitude. Her long arms hung motion-less by her sides. Altogether she looked like some prisoner, falsely accused of a crime that she loathed and despised, and from which she was too indignant to justify herself.

Mr. Thornton made a hasty step or two forwards; recovered himself, and went with quiet firmness to the door (which she had left open), and shut it. Then he came back, and stood opposite to her for a moment, receiving the general impression of her beautiful presence, before he dared to disturb it, perhaps to repel it, by what he had to say.

'Miss Hale, I was very ungrateful yesterday—'

'You had nothing to be grateful for,' said she, raising her eyes, and looking full and straight at him. 'You mean, I suppose, that you believe you ought to thank me for what I did.' In spite of herself—in defiance of her anger—the thick blushes came all over her face, and burnt into her very eyes; which fell not nevertheless from their grave and steady look. 'It was only a natural instinct; any woman would have done just the same. We all feel the sanctity of our sex as a high privilege when we see danger. I ought rather,' said she, hastily, 'to apologise to you, for having said thoughtless words which sent you down into the danger.'

'It was not your words; it was the truth they conveyed, pungently as it was expressed. But you shall not drive me off upon that, and so escape the expression of my deep gratitude, my—' he was on the verge now; he would not speak in the haste of his hot passion; he would weigh each word. He would; and his will was triumphant. He stopped in mid career.

'I do not try to escape from anything,' said she. 'I simply say, that you owe me no gratitude; and I may add, that any expression of it will be painful to me, because I do not feel that I deserve it. Still, if it will relieve you from even a fancied obligation, speak on.'

'I do not want to be relieved from any obligation,' said he, goaded by her calm manner. 'Fancied, or not fancied—I question not myself to know which—I choose to believe that I owe my very life to you—ay—smile, and think it an exaggeration if you will. I believe it, because it adds a value to that life to think—oh, Miss Hale!' continued he, lowering his voice to such a tender intensity of passion that she shivered and trembled before him, 'to think circumstance so wrought, that whenever I exult in existence henceforward, I may say to myself, "All this gladness in life, all honest pride in doing my work in the world, all this keen sense of being, I owe to her!" And it doubles the gladness, it makes the pride glow, it sharpens the sense of existence till I hardly know if it is pain or pleasure, to think that I owe it to one—nay, you must, you shall hear'—said he, stepping forwards with stern determination—'to one whom I love, as I do not believe man ever loved woman before.' He held her hand tight in his. He panted as he listened for what should come. He threw the hand away with indignation, as he heard her icy tone; for icy it was, though the words came faltering out, as if she knew not where to find them.

'Your way of speaking shocks me. It is blasphemous. I cannot help it, if that is my first feeling. It might not be so, I dare say, if I understood the kind of feeling you describe. I do not want to vex you; and besides, we must speak gently, for mamma is asleep; but your whole manner offends me—'

'How!' exclaimed he. 'Offends you! I am indeed most unfortunate.'

'Yes!' said she, with recovered dignity. 'I do feel offended; and, I think, justly. You seem to fancy that my conduct of yesterday'—again the deep carnation blush, but this time with eyes kindling with indignation rather than shame—'was a personal act between you and me; and that you may come and thank me for it, instead of perceiving, as a gentleman would—yes! a gentleman,' she repeated, in allusion to their former conversation about that word, 'that any woman, worthy of the name of woman, would come forward to shield, with her revered helplessness, a man in danger from the violence of numbers.'

'And the gentleman thus rescued is forbidden the relief of thanks!' he broke in contemptuously. 'I am a man. I claim the right of expressing my feelings.'

'And I yielded to the right; simply saying that you gave me pain by insisting upon it,' she replied, proudly. 'But you seem to have imagined, that I was not merely guided by womanly instinct, but'—and here the passionate tears (kept down for long—struggled with vehemently) came up into her eyes, and choked her voice—'but that I was prompted by some particular feeling for you—you! Why, there was not a man—not a poor desperate man in all that crowd—for whom I had not more sympathy—for whom I should not have done what little I could more heartily.'

'You may speak on, Miss Hale. I am aware of all these misplaced sympathies of yours. I now believe that it was only your innate sense of oppression—(yes; I, though a master, may be oppressed)—that made you act so nobly as you did. I know you despise me; allow me to say, it is because you do not understand me.'

'I do not care to understand,' she replied, taking hold of the table to steady herself; for she thought him cruel—as, indeed, he was—and she was weak with her indignation.

'No, I see you do not. You are unfair and unjust.'

Margaret compressed her lips. She would not speak in answer to such accusations. But, for all that—for all his savage words, he could have thrown himself at her feet, and kissed the hem of her garment. She did not speak; she did not move. The tears of wounded pride fell hot and fast. He waited awhile, longing for her to say something, even a taunt, to which he might reply. But she was silent. He took up his hat.

'One word more. You look as if you thought it tainted you to be loved by me. You cannot avoid it. Nay, I, if I would, cannot cleanse you from it. But I would not, if I could. I have never loved any woman before: my life has been too busy, my thoughts too much absorbed with other things. Now I love, and will love. But do not be afraid of too much expression on my part.'

'I am not afraid,' she replied, lifting herself straight up. 'No one yet has ever dared to be impertinent to me, and no one ever shall. But, Mr. Thornton, you have been very kind to my father,' said she, changing her whole tone and bearing to a most womanly softness. 'Don't let us go on making each other angry. Pray don't!' He took no notice of her words: he occupied himself in smoothing the nap of his hat with his coat-sleeve, for half a minute or so; and then, rejecting her offered hand, and making as if he did not see her grave look of regret, he turned abruptly away, and left the room. Margaret caught one glance at his face before he went.

When he was gone, she thought she had seen the gleam of unshed tears in his eyes; and that turned her proud dislike into something different and kinder, if nearly as painful—self-reproach for having caused such mortification to any one.

'But how could I help it?' asked she of herself. 'I never liked him. I was civil; but I took no trouble to conceal my indifference. Indeed, I never thought about myself or him, so my manners must have shown the truth. All that yesterday, he might mistake. But that is his fault, not mine. I would do it again, if need were, though it does lead me into all this shame and trouble.'

***Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Brontë (1847): extract from Chapter 14**

Instead of speaking, I smiled; and not a very complacent or submissive smile either.

"Speak," he urged.

"What about, sir?"

"Whatever you like. I leave both the choice of subject and the manner of treating it entirely to yourself."

Accordingly I sat and said nothing: "If he expects me to talk for the mere sake of talking and showing off, he will find he has addressed himself to the wrong person," I thought.

"You are dumb, Miss Eyre."

I was dumb still. He bent his head a little towards me, and with a single hasty glance seemed to dive into my eyes.

"Stubborn?" he said, "and annoyed. Ah! it is consistent. I put my request in an absurd, almost insolent form. Miss Eyre, I beg your pardon. The fact is, once for all, I don't wish to treat you like an inferior: that is" (correcting himself), "I claim only such superiority as must result from twenty years' difference in age and a century's advance in experience. This is legitimate, et j'y tiens, as Adele would say; and it is by virtue of this superiority, and this alone, that I desire you to have the goodness to talk to me a little now, and divert my thoughts, which are galled with dwelling on one point — cankering as a rusty nail."

He had deigned an explanation, almost an apology, and I did not feel insensible to his condescension, and would not seem so.

"I am willing to amuse you, if I can, sir — quite willing; but I cannot introduce a topic, because how do I know what will interest you? Ask me questions, and I will do my best to answer them."

"Then, in the first place, do you agree with me that I have a right to be a little masterful, abrupt, perhaps exacting, sometimes, on the grounds I stated, namely, that I am old enough to be your father, and that I have battled through a varied experience with many men of many nations, and roamed over half the globe, while you have lived quietly with one set of people in one house?"

"Do as you please, sir."

"That is no answer; or rather it is a very irritating, because a very evasive one. Reply clearly."

"I don't think, sir, you have a right to command me, merely because you are older than I, or because you have seen more of the world than I have; your claim to superiority depends on the use you have made of your time and experience."

"Humph! Promptly spoken. But I won't allow that, seeing that it would never suit my case, as I have made an indifferent, not to say a bad, use of both advantages. Leaving superiority out of the question, then, you must still agree to receive my orders now and then, without being piqued or hurt by the tone of command. Will you?"

I smiled: I thought to myself Mr. Rochester is peculiar — he seems to forget that he pays me 30 pounds per annum for receiving his orders.

"The smile is very well," said he, catching instantly the passing expression; "but speak too."

"I was thinking, sir, that very few masters would trouble themselves to inquire whether or not their paid subordinates were piqued and hurt by their orders."

"Paid subordinates! What! you are my paid subordinate, are you? Oh yes, I had forgotten the salary! Well then, on that mercenary ground, will you agree to let me hector a little?"

"No, sir, not on that ground; but, on the ground that you did forget it, and that you care whether or not a dependent is comfortable in his dependency, I agree heartily."

"The Story of an Hour", Kate Chopin (1894)

Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble, great care was taken to break to her as gently as possible the news of her husband's death.

It was her sister Josephine who told her, in broken sentences; veiled hints that revealed in half concealing. Her husband's friend Richards was there, too, near her. It was he who had been in the newspaper office when intelligence of the railroad disaster was received, with Brently Mallard's name leading the list of "killed." He had only taken the time to assure himself of its truth by a second telegram, and had hastened to forestall any less careful, less tender friend in bearing the sad message.

She did not hear the story as many women have heard the same, with a paralyzed inability to accept its significance. She wept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment, in her sister's arms. When the storm of grief had spent itself she went away to her room alone. She would have no one follow her.

There stood, facing the open window, a comfortable, roomy armchair. Into this she sank, pressed down by a physical exhaustion that haunted her body and seemed to reach into her soul.

She could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life. The delicious breath of rain was in the air. In the street below a peddler was crying his wares. The notes of a distant song which some one was singing reached her faintly, and countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves.

There were patches of blue sky showing here and there through the clouds that had met and piled one above the other in the west facing her window.

She sat with her head thrown back upon the cushion of the chair, quite motionless, except when a sob came up into her throat and shook her, as a child who has cried itself to sleep continues to sob in its dreams.

She was young, with a fair, calm face, whose lines bespoke repression and even a certain strength. But now there was a dull stare in her eyes, whose gaze was fixed away off yonder on one of those patches of blue sky. It was not a glance of reflection, but rather indicated a suspension of intelligent thought.

There was something coming to her and she was waiting for it, fearfully. What was it? She did not know; it was too subtle and elusive to name. But she felt it, creeping out of the sky, reaching toward her through the sounds, the scents, the color that filled the air.

Now her bosom rose and fell tumultuously. She was beginning to recognize this thing that was approaching to possess her, and she was striving to beat it back with her will--as powerless as her two white slender hands would have been. When she abandoned herself a little whispered word escaped her slightly parted lips. She said it over and over under hte breath: "free, free, free!" The vacant stare and the look of terror that had followed it went from her eyes. They stayed keen and bright. Her pulses beat fast, and the coursing blood warmed and relaxed every inch of her body.

She did not stop to ask if it were or were not a monstrous joy that held her. A clear and exalted perception enabled her to dismiss the suggestion as trivial. She knew that she would weep again when she saw the kind, tender hands folded in death; the face that had never looked save with love upon her, fixed and gray and dead. But she saw beyond that bitter moment a long procession of years to come that would belong to her absolutely. And she opened and spread her arms out to them in welcome.

There would be no one to live for during those coming years; she would live for herself. There would be no powerful will bending hers in that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to impose a private will upon a fellow-creature. A kind intention or a cruel intention made the act seem no less a crime as she looked upon it in that brief moment of illumination.

And yet she had loved him--sometimes. Often she had not. What did it matter! What could love, the unsolved mystery, count for in the face of this possession of self-assertion which she suddenly recognized as the strongest impulse of her being!

"Free! Body and soul free!" she kept whispering.

Josephine was kneeling before the closed door with her lips to the keyhole, imploring for admission. "Louise, open the door! I beg; open the door--you will make yourself ill. What are you doing, Louise? For heaven's sake open the door."

"Go away. I am not making myself ill." No; she was drinking in a very elixir of life through that open window.

Her fancy was running riot along those days ahead of her. Spring days, and summer days, and all sorts of days that would be her own. She breathed a quick prayer that life might be long. It was only yesterday she had thought with a shudder that life might be long.

She arose at length and opened the door to her sister's importunities. There was a feverish triumph in her eyes, and she carried herself unwittingly like a goddess of Victory. She clasped her sister's waist, and together they descended the stairs. Richards stood waiting for them at the bottom.

Some one was opening the front door with a latchkey. It was Brently Mallard who entered, a little travel-stained, composedly carrying his grip-sack and umbrella. He had been far from the scene of the accident, and did not even know there had been one. He stood amazed at Josephine's piercing cry; at Richards' quick motion to screen him from the view of his wife.

When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease--of the joy that kills.

Transcript of Emma Watson's speech at the UN: He for She Campaign, New York, 20 September 2014

Today we are launching a campaign called "HeForShe."

I am reaching out to you because I need your help. We want to end gender inequality—and to do that we need everyone to be involved.

This is the first campaign of its kind at the UN: we want to try and galvanize as many men and boys as possible to be advocates for gender equality. And we don't just want to talk about it, but make sure it is tangible.

I was appointed six months ago and the more I have spoken about feminism the more I have realized that fighting for women's rights has too often become synonymous with man-hating. If there is one thing I know for certain, it is that this has to stop.

For the record, feminism by definition is: "The belief that men and women should have equal rights and opportunities. It is the theory of the political, economic and social equality of the sexes."

I started questioning gender-based assumptions when at eight I was confused at being called "bossy," because I wanted to direct the plays we would put on for our parents—but the boys were not. When at fourteen I started being sexualized by certain elements of the press. When at fifteen my girlfriends started dropping out of their sports teams because they didn't want to appear "muscly." When at eighteen my male friends were unable to express their feelings.

I decided I was a feminist and this seemed uncomplicated to me. But my recent research has shown me that feminism has become an unpopular word.

Apparently I am among the ranks of women whose expressions are seen as too strong, too aggressive, isolating, anti-men and, unattractive.

Why is the word such an uncomfortable one?

I am from Britain and think it is right that as a woman I am paid the same as my male counterparts. I think it is right that I should be able to make decisions about my own body. I think it is right that women be involved on my behalf in the policies and decision-making of my country. I think it is right that socially I am afforded the same respect as men. But sadly I can say that there is no one country in the world where all women can expect to receive these rights.

No country in the world can yet say they have achieved gender equality.

These rights I consider to be human rights but I am one of the lucky ones. My life is a sheer privilege because my parents didn't love me less because I was born a daughter. My school did not limit me because I was a girl. My mentors didn't assume I would go less far because I might give birth to a child one day. These influencers were the gender equality ambassadors that made me who I am today. They may not know it, but they are the inadvertent feminists who are changing the world today. And we need more of those.

And if you still hate the word—it is not the word that is important but the idea and the ambition behind it. Because not all women have been afforded the same rights that I have. In fact, statistically, very few have been.

In 1995, Hilary Clinton made a famous speech in Beijing about women's rights. Sadly many of the things she wanted to change are still a reality today.

But what stood out for me the most was that only 30 per cent of her audience were male. How can we affect change in the world when only half of it is invited or feel welcome to participate in the conversation?

Men—I would like to take this opportunity to extend your formal invitation. Gender equality is your issue too.

Because to date, I've seen my father's role as a parent being valued less by society despite my needing his presence as a child as much as my mother's.

I've seen young men suffering from mental illness unable to ask for help for fear it would make them look less "macho"—in fact in the UK suicide is the biggest killer of men between 20-49 years of age; eclipsing road accidents, cancer and coronary heart disease. I've seen men made fragile and insecure by a distorted sense of what constitutes male success. Men don't have the benefits of equality either.

We don't often talk about men being imprisoned by gender stereotypes but I can see that that they are and that when they are free, things will change for women as a natural consequence.

If men don't have to be aggressive in order to be accepted women won't feel compelled to be submissive. If men don't have to control, women won't have to be controlled.

Both men and women should feel free to be sensitive. Both men and women should feel free to be strong... It is time that we all perceive gender on a spectrum not as two opposing sets of ideals.

If we stop defining each other by what we are not and start defining ourselves by what we are—we can all be freer and this is what HeForShe is about. It's about freedom.

I want men to take up this mantle. So their daughters, sisters and mothers can be free from prejudice but also so that their sons have permission to be vulnerable and human too—reclaim those parts of themselves they abandoned and in doing so be a more true and complete version of themselves.

You might be thinking who is this Harry Potter girl? And what is she doing up on stage at the UN. It's a good question and trust me, I have been asking myself the same thing. I don't know if I am qualified to be here. All I know is that I care about this problem. And I want to make it better.

And having seen what I've seen—and given the chance—I feel it is my duty to say something. English Statesman Edmund Burke said: "All that is needed for the forces of evil to triumph is for enough good men and women to do nothing."

In my nervousness for this speech and in my moments of doubt I've told myself firmly—if not me, who, if not now, when. If you have similar doubts when opportunities are presented to you I hope those words might be helpful.

Because the reality is that if we do nothing it will take 75 years, or for me to be nearly a hundred before women can expect to be paid the same as men for the same work. 15.5 million girls will be married in the next 16 years as children. And at current rates it won't be until 2086 before all rural African girls will be able to receive a secondary education.

If you believe in equality, you might be one of those inadvertent feminists I spoke of earlier.

And for this I applaud you.

We are struggling for a uniting word but the good news is we have a uniting movement. It is called HeForShe. I am inviting you to step forward, to be seen to speak up, to be the "he" for "she". And to ask yourself if not me, who? If not now, when?

Thank you.