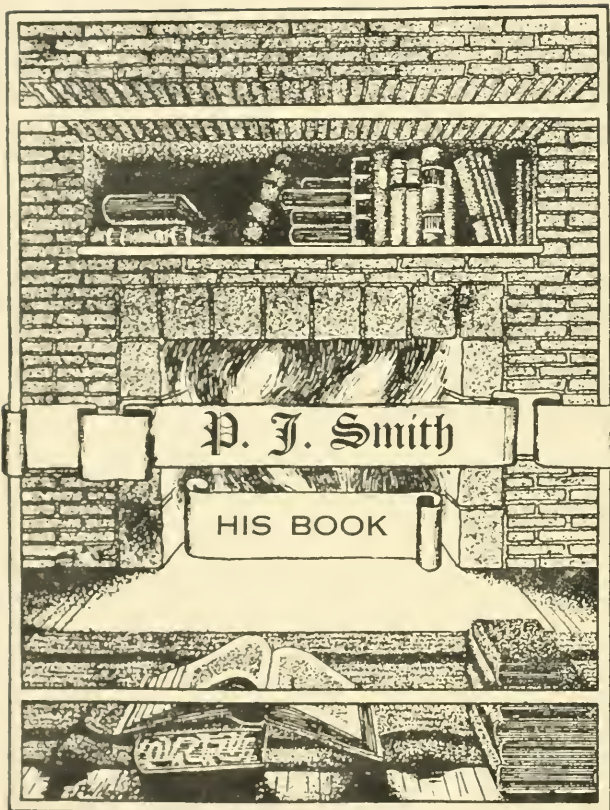


Ellen Key

Nyström-Hamilton

ia



P. J. Smith

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*Ellen Key*

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# Ellen Key

## Her Life and Her Work

By

**Louise Nyström-Hamilton**

Authorised Translation from the Swedish by

**A. E. B. Fries**

With an Introduction by

**Havelock Ellis**

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## INTRODUCTION

NOT a few among those who read Ellen Key's books and hear of her influence in the world, have desired to know more of her life than has yet been placed before the English reader. Such desire will be to some extent satisfied by this translation of the biography written by Mrs. Louise Nyström-Hamilton. It is simply, as the author herself states, a record of external events such as we may reasonably expect in the biography of a living person, without any attempt to estimate Ellen Key's work or even to propagandise her doctrines. The sketch is slight, but we can regard it as competent. Mrs. Nyström-Hamilton, who was independently acquainted with the Key family, has known Ellen Key for many years, and been associated with her work, for she is the wife of Dr. Anton Nyström, who founded the People's Institute at Stockholm where Ellen Key lectured for twenty years. She has also written several books on the sexual life (one of them

translated into English) which, though their scientific value has been disputed, are inspired throughout by a fine humanitarian zeal. What Mrs. Nyström-Hamilton has to tell may thus be received with confidence as coming out of the circle in which Ellen Key has spent the greater part of her active life. If she wisely refrains from any attempt at a final estimate of Ellen Key, she at all events assists us to form our own opinions.

Ellen Key has sometimes been called the modern St. Brigitta. That famous saint of the North came out of Sweden six hundred years ago to write her book of *Revelations* and to attempt the moral reformation of her age. To-day, with a similar spontaneous energy, a similar self-inspired vocation, Ellen Key comes to us out of Sweden to preach a moral reformation of a somewhat different kind. Her message has not been the outcome of historical study or of sociological investigation. Notwithstanding the wide and miscellaneous culture which circumstance and an eagerly receptive brain enabled her to acquire, her temperamental activities have throughout been of a rich and impulsive rather than of a scientific and methodical character. Her attitude has been the outcome of deep

natural instinct, so that when in 1895, at the request of the Committee of the Women's Exhibition in Copenhagen, she first entered the field in which she was to become so famous, by delivering a lecture on the "Misused Forces of Womanhood," her ideas seemed to herself so much matter of course, mere commonplace truths which all developed women must hold, that she experienced some difficulty in giving expression to them. It was not until protests and even attacks followed the delivery and publication of this lecture that she realised that here was her mission and that the world had need of her message.

To-day, Ellen Key stands at that point in the Woman Movement where growth is most vital and the conflict of opinions most acute. It is quite easy to display resentment towards Ellen Key, and to cast ridicule on her work; the one and the other have been done even by people who have themselves played a highly honourable part in the Woman Movement. But there can be no denying that Ellen Key is intensely alive, acutely sensitive to all the best influences of her time, and throughout, in her weakness and in her strength, a thorough and essential woman.

Her receptive intelligence has enabled her woman's intuition to grasp the nature of the problem with which Feminism has to grapple. Here, at the spot where she stands, the nature and direction of the Woman's Movement of the future must be determined. That alone suffices to make the study of her work indispensable.

No doubt, Ellen Key's attitude must be at first disconcerting, and not to one party only in this question but also to the other. There, on the one hand, has been the party which insistently declared: Woman is the Mother, and the Home is her sphere; by going outside her sphere, by competing with men, and by seeking to do everything that is done by man, she becomes unfit for the work that she alone can do; she degrades herself and injures the race. There, on the other hand, is the party which, with equal or greater insistence, declares: Woman is a Human Being; Justice demands that she shall possess the same rights and privileges as Man and be free to lead the same life as Man. And between those two parties here comes Ellen Key with her declaration: Yes, Woman is the Mother, the future of the race is in her hands, and woman is a Human

Being; it is because she is both that she needs complete freedom for development and the power to exercise all human rights, not in order to imitate man, or to do any work which he may be better fitted to do, but to enable her to do her own work, to follow her own natural impulses, and to exercise that function of Motherhood, in the wider sense of the word, which is not surpassed in importance by any other in the world.

Certainly, such a declaration could not fail to be disconcerting to each party. Indeed it tore away the blinkers from the eyes of both the two contending parties. Their opposing affirmations were united, and their opposing negations were dissolved in transparent futility. The whole question was lifted on to a higher plane. The new demands which every age must necessarily make were upheld, not at the expense of the ancient and precious traditions of the race, but by showing that they were necessary in order to maintain those traditions. Surely no mean achievement!

*Havelock Ellis.*

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## PREFACE

FOR a great many years, the name of Ellen Key has been a subject of discussion, not only in the public press, but also within family circles. Friends have become enemies for the sake of that name. Why? Because Ellen Key has fearlessly placed a number of problems in clear light. Discussions have been raised about well-nigh all important human relationships as a consequence of something she has said on this or that occasion, speaking never at random, but as a result of *slow and quiet observations which have led her to her own clear solutions*. She did not want to contribute to the prolongation of the concealed enmity between different classes of society, contending opinions, representatives of the New and the Old. She wished rather to promote frankness and truth. She wanted to clear the air of the noxious mists of hypocrisy and pretence. She forced the battle into the open, and the conflict has become so violent that some have not taken time to think, but

frequently have struck wildly, and in order to end quickly this battle, caused by the opinions she has expressed, her opponents have not hesitated to attack her character.

I have waited long in the hope that some other would write of her life and character, but as none has appeared, I have decided, in spite of grave doubts, to make public such facts and memoranda as I have gathered from those closely associated with her, and have received, on request, from herself—concerning origin and outward circumstances,—as well as my own observations during our many years of friendship.

“Ellen Key holds a place in our literature, the importance of which ought to be clear to all, undoubted and respected. We have never had many intellectually receptive as well as productive authors, who were able to receive the multitudinous currents of ideas, transfuse them with their own thoughts, colour them with their own personality, and, thus transformed, return them to their various and diffuse sources. Our culture, which stands high in many respects, has never possessed a corresponding power of unifying life. Especially in the social field we have weakly submitted to the cleavage between theory

and practice, and have been prone to avoid discussions, not in order to have peace for better thinking but rather to let our thoughts alone. Abroad it has been otherwise; but our nation has lacked minds ready to listen to voices from afar. Ellen Key is the great exception. Within her range of interests she stands out before wide circles of serious and highly cultured people throughout Europe as a very remarkable personality.”<sup>1</sup>

The truth of this statement I have myself had occasion to observe during travels abroad. The desire to hear about Ellen Key frequently causes the foreigner to seek the acquaintance of the Swedish tourist.

The foreign press bears continuous evidence of the unusual attention everywhere produced by Ellen Key. In an article, published in *Der Tag* the 13th March, 1904, on Swedish literature, Ellen Key is spoken of as one of the four Swedish authors best known in Germany, whose name has made our country famous in these times.

That this assertion is no exaggeration is made clear by the fact that *The Century of the Child*—a book which in Sweden has

<sup>1</sup> With the above quotation, Per Hallström, a Swedish critic and essayist, begins his review of *Life-lines*, i.

barely been reviewed—in Germany has been issued in eight editions and is translated into Danish, Dutch, Polish, Hungarian, Russian, English, and French; *Life-lines*, i., has come out in six editions in Germany and is being translated into a number of other languages; *Tankebilder (Images of Thought)* has also been published in many editions, and in several languages; from many foreign lands inquiries have been made with reference to future lectures; not to mention the sympathy expressed in letters from all parts of the world.

The enormous amount of matter in the shape of articles about Ellen Key, which has accumulated, often unread, but now placed at my disposal, proves how actively she has occupied people's minds for many years. But while in Sweden the misunderstanding and disapproval outweigh the admiration and approbation, the reverse is true abroad.

Ellen Key has never made any effort to procure translations, reviews, or notices, and for that reason the above mentioned facts are very significant, and go far toward proving the old saying that no one is prophet in his own land. It would not be surprising if a biography of Ellen Key were considered unnecessary in Sweden—in Germany it is much

desired—but although conscious of such a possibility I have decided to publish it in Swedish for two reasons: first, because I desire to give it as a preparatory study for future biographers; and secondly because I have so long and so indignantly listened to the personal slander by which flippancy and malice have, to a certain extent, limited the influence of Ellen Key's words. This book has become a matter of conscience with me.

In the following pages I have tried to give a true picture of the woman, Ellen Key, not a study of her literary works. The latter are only mentioned in so far as they have seemed to me to throw light upon her character.

LOUISE NYSTRÖM-HAMILTON.

STOCKHOLM, October, 1904.



## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I.—ANCESTRY . . . . .	1
II.—CHILDHOOD AND EARLY YOUTH . . . . .	13
III.—YOUTH AND THE FIRST YEARS IN STOCKHOLM . . . . .	38
IV.—REMOVAL OF THE FAMILY TO STOCKHOLM	50
V.—WORK . . . . .	64
VI.—PUBLIC ACTIVITY . . . . .	81
VII.—THE LAST YEARS IN STOCKHOLM . . . . .	138
SUPPLEMENT . . . . .	158
APPENDIX—QUOTATIONS FROM PRESS UTTERANCES ABOUT ELLEN KEY ON HER SIXTIETH BIRTHDAY . . . . .	179





## ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
ELLEN KEY . . . . . <i>Frontispiece</i> From a photograph by Becker & Maass, Berlin.	
EMIL KEY, 1873. FATHER OF ELLEN KEY . . . . . Photograph by Eurenus & Quist.	6
SOPHIE KEY, 1874. MOTHER OF ELLEN KEY . . . . . Photograph by Eurenus & Quist.	6
THE BIRTHPLACE OF ELLEN KEY. SUNDSHOLM . . . . .	14
ELLEN KEY, 1856 . . . . . From a silhouette.	30
ELLEN KEY, AGED 15 . . . . .	30
ELLEN KEY IN 1885 . . . . . From a photograph by A. Apelgren, Stockholm.	70
ELLEN KEY . . . . . From a photograph by permission of Slenders Forlag, Copenhagen.	152
STRAND. THE HOME OF ELLEN KEY . . . . .	166
ELLEN KEY, 1911 . . . . . From a photograph taken at her home, Strand.	174



# ELLEN KEY

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## CHAPTER I

### ANCESTRY

THE significance to the individual of his descent is one of the many riddles left for future generations to solve. Conjectures and probabilities alone form the basis for the hypothesis that our various qualities are coupled to the cells that link the generations together, and yet it is peculiarly interesting to review a family-tree, however briefly, where distinct characteristics, marked in members of both main branches, are found again in the descendant.

Ellen Key represents the latest branch of a family-tree which bears names among the foremost in history, and which has drawn its life from the blood of many different nations.

The Key family is of Scotch-Celtic lineage. Day-dreams, art, and poetry are native to the

Celtic blood. The Scotch have always shown themselves brave and proud, devoted and true, and spiritually alive; but also fanatical and hard.

Per Hallström speaking of the Scotch says: "This peculiarly composite and strongly individualised nation with its Celtic emotionalism, Anglo-Saxon power and passion, Norse disposition, and Puritanic Bible-faith . . . It has been said of the Scotch temperament that it carries more sail than the English, and at the same time ploughs deeper into the waters."

The M'Kay<sup>1</sup> clan is still one of the most active and united clans in Sutherland, the meagre northern part of Scotland. The meaning of the name *MacKay* is best interpreted by "war-flame," or "fiery" and "warlike." The coat-of-arms shows a firmly closed fist holding a dagger. Under it are the words: *Manu Forti*.

After the Thirty Years' War, many foreign families, whose male descendants had served under Gustavus (Adolphus) II, came to Sweden and settled there. Among these we find James M'Key, who, during this war, was

<sup>1</sup> This is the usual spelling though it varies between Kay, Cay, and Key.

appointed lieutenant-colonel. In the historical sketch entitled *An Old Scotch Brigade*, the M'Key regiment is depicted as having fought with great distinction under the Swedish banner.

Fredrik Key, great-grandson of James M'Key, district judge, and, like his forefather, owner of an estate in Småland, married the widow of Captain J. A. Nordenflycht, the nephew of the poet Hedvig Charlotta Nordenflycht, himself similarly gifted. Ellen Key has jokingly said that "this case seems to verify the assertion that a widow's children by a later marriage may resemble the former husband, since first in C. F. Key, my great-grandfather, son of this couple, did the strong æsthetic and literary interest show itself in our branch of the family." But this interest may also have come from another source. For the widow Nordenflycht, whose maiden name was Louisa Elertz (she was German and came from Stralsund), was herself a talented woman.

With no knowledge of any connection in the sense above alluded to, Oscar Levertin, in his brilliant essay on Hedvig Charlotta Nordenflycht (1718-1763), Sweden's first woman poet, has given Ellen Key an important

place as an author "in direct descending (intellectual) line from her." The above mentioned hypothesis may not be altogether unreasonable, at least in cases where the memory of the departed husband is kept alive in the heart of the bereft wife, even though she contracts a new marriage for some reason or other. Be this as it may, Oscar Levertin has rightly observed the similarity between these two writers, which shows itself in many ways. In the essay just referred to he says: "Fru N. is the portal-figure of the new age in our literary history. . . . She is gripped by a revolution of both heart and mind. . . . She had such an exalted opinion of her literary profession that she even dared to strike for the spiritual freedom of her fellow-women and their equality with man, as the first great woman's rights' champion in the country. . . . She had an amazon's fearless courage and holy love of battle. Unafraid, with an honesty which knew of no reserve, she fought for her opinions all her life. . . ."

These characterisations would fit Ellen Key with slight paraphrase, unnecessary for those who peruse this biography. In their private lives, on the other hand, there is no further

similarity except that Hedvig Charlotta Nordenflycht also "escaped school altogether," and that in her childhood she showed the best traits of her nature,—“burning desire for knowledge, tenacity in her struggle for clearness, and courage in defending her convictions.”

Fredrik Key's only son, Carl Fredrik Key, member of the King's bodyguard, and estate-owner, married to Beate Marie Sundevall, was, as we have said, a literary and artistically gifted man, who collected an excellent library containing the best literature of the time. He was an enthusiastic admirer of Rousseau, and gave the name of Emil to his son. This Emil Key (born 1799), lieutenant in the Småland regiment of hussars, and country estate-owner, was also interested in art and literature and was himself an amateur artist. He married his cousin Caroline Fleetwood, of the Swedish branch of that old English family, whose most noted member was Cromwell's companion-in-arms, and later, son-in-law.<sup>1</sup> This couple had two children, a son Emil (Ellen Key's father), and a daughter

<sup>1</sup> Charles Fleetwood, Lord Deputy of Ireland during the Commonwealth, married to Bridget, Oliver Cromwell's eldest daughter.  
—Translator's footnote.

Marie Louise, married to Baron Carl Raab of Helgerum.

Through Ellen Key's mother, Sophie Posse, royal and old aristocratic blood was fused into the family. German emperors are among the ancestors,—Karl the Great, Fredrik the Second Hohenstauen, and many other princes, if the table of genealogy can be trusted.

Ellen Key's forefathers have been squires and statesmen, judges and warriors. None of them has been a clergyman.

Another circumstance connected with her origin is noteworthy. Ellen Key has grown up in Southern Tjust, one of the most beautiful parts of Småland, where her paternal family had lived for centuries. Her mother's family came from Skåne. And although her ancestors had all belonged to the aristocracy, and had enriched their stock by intermarriage with families outside of their own province, it is more than likely that the characteristics of the national disposition in these two southern provinces have exercised a certain influence. May not the indomitable will and strength in Ellen Key be due in part to her Småland origin, and may not her desire for contemplation, her tranquillity and introspection, come from Skåne?





EMIL KEY, 1873. FATHER OF ELLEN KEY.

PHOTOGRAPH BY EURENIUS & QUIST.



SOPHIE KEY, 1874. MOTHER OF ELLEN KEY.

PHOTOGRAPH BY EURENIUS & QUIST.



C. F. E. Emil Key was born 1822 at Edsmanor in Småland. His parents married early, were devoted and happy, but the father died very suddenly when the son was but two years old. The mother was rarely beautiful. None who had seen her could forget her. She contracted a second marriage with Baron Adam Christian Raab, renowned for his participation in political life. He had seen her once while she was still married and had said to himself at the time: "She, or none." A year later she was a widow, and in her loneliness, and with her two young children to bring up, she finally yielded to his ardent suit.

Emil Key was brought up on his step-father's country-seat, Ryssbylund, near Björnö, the childhood home of Sophie Posse. When his education was completed, he entered the civil service, which he left after five years. His inheritance from his father afforded him ample means for travels abroad, and these journeys he later described in a narrative which was one of the books often read by his daughter Ellen, awakening in her a longing for the wonders of the great world.

Emil Key was in every respect a liberal-minded man. His ideal of a citizen was

George Washington, whose name he gave one of his sons. He expressed his liberal ideas in the then radical *Aftonposten*, to which he was an occasional contributor, in the latter part of the year 1840. During his years of civil service in Stockholm, he enjoyed the society of men of letters, and his taste for art and literature became further developed. In 1848 he bought Sundsholm, and later enlarged this country-estate by considerable purchases of adjoining land. In the many communal tasks entrusted to him he found a suitable field of activity for his energy. The confidence he thereby inspired showed itself when he, at the time of the adoption of the new constitution, obtained a seat in the Second Chamber, as representative for Tjust County, a place which he kept until the Riksdag of 1883. He had for some time thought that a new Agrarian party was necessary for the solution of the important problems of land-taxation, measures of defence, etc. At the first Riksdag of the new Government, this party was formed by Emil Key, Arvid Posse, a few other noblemen, and several prominent farmers. Through Key's influence the party was led to take up wider social questions. He was a good speaker and a truly

unprejudiced champion of the questions of the day.

Emil Key was one of the trusted leaders of his party, and was a permanent member of the standing Financial Committee of the Riksdag. Among other things, he introduced a bill for a new army organisation, and defended his views in print and speech with great brilliancy. But although the Second Chamber concurred in his main contentions which, moreover, were incorporated in a Government proposal, the bill failed when it came to a vote. Defeated in this, one of his most cherished political plans, Key found the time ripe for withdrawing from public life, where he had directly and indirectly lost so much. It was a great blow for Key, who, for eighteen years, had fought for what he considered a question of vital import to his country. Having used his money lavishly in political service, he found himself obliged to accept a position offered him as postmaster in Helsingborg, and the family left the old home, Sundsholm.

Emil Key was stately and handsome in appearance, and had the attractive and affable manners that became his high culture, and the credulous idealism of a poetic nature to

which are due many of the disappointments which ruined his political career.

Sophie Posse had married Emil Key, known as "Scandinavian,"<sup>1</sup> contributor to *Afton-bladet*, "Revolutionist" and Almkvist<sup>2</sup> enthusiast, much to her noble family's chagrin. But her father had settled the matter with the simple words: "I married for love myself, and my children shall do the same."

Sophie Key, like her husband, was broad-minded in the best sense of the word. Though both were aristocratic in mind and manner they held democratic opinions. As an example, it may be stated that Fru Key never allowed anyone to call her Countess, but declined the title, something quite unusual in those days. Her views in regard to most questions were extremely modern, even if compared with the view of our own times. In politics she was a Radical. She showed her interest in the children and young girls of the parish by founding a Home for the rearing of unprotected girls and training them for housework. Twenty women of the yeomanry coöperated with her in this enthusiastic work.

<sup>1</sup> A believer in the common interests of the Scandinavian countries instead of a narrow patriot.—Translator's footnote.

<sup>2</sup> Sweden's most modern writer and poet.—Translator's footnote.

Fru Key was always willing to promote her daughter Ellen's general interests. At the latter's request she several times took discharged women-prisoners into her service. Her hatred for all social injustices was deep-felt and sincere. Ellen Key once told of an amusing situation in their home-life. Fru Key much enjoyed reading the fiery paper, *Fäderneslandet*, which came in the mail to a Republican-minded neighbour, who had christened his sons America and California! Herr Key was wont to make a joke of the fact that his wife's views tended to coincide with those of the paper. Ellen Key adds: "In our days my mother would certainly have been an anarchist. I generally sided with her against my father, who was more moderate and did not consider the murder of tyrants quite as helpful to society as did we!" We here get a good view of Ellen Key's passion for freedom and hatred of oppression as nourished by her mother's radicalism.

Fru Sophie Key was one of those rare natures capable of boundless devotion, and she was therefore indispensable to her husband. Always delicate, she practised a remarkable self-control, that she might not be a burden to him. Never indulging herself, she

did not over-indulge her children, who learned from her example to be lenient with others, but strict with themselves. With an upright character, a simple and unpretentious personality, she combined a good mind with æsthetic interests.

Sincere love united the couple. Fru Sophie Key died in 1884, in the former home, Sundsholm, whither she had been brought in the hope that the change would restore her health. Her last words and thoughts, while in the shadow of death, concerned her husband, and her only request was that his letters should accompany her to her final resting-place.

Emil Key mourned the loss of his wife so greatly that it brought on a hemorrhage of the brain, after which he endured years of suffering and sinking vitality until he died in 1892.



## CHAPTER II

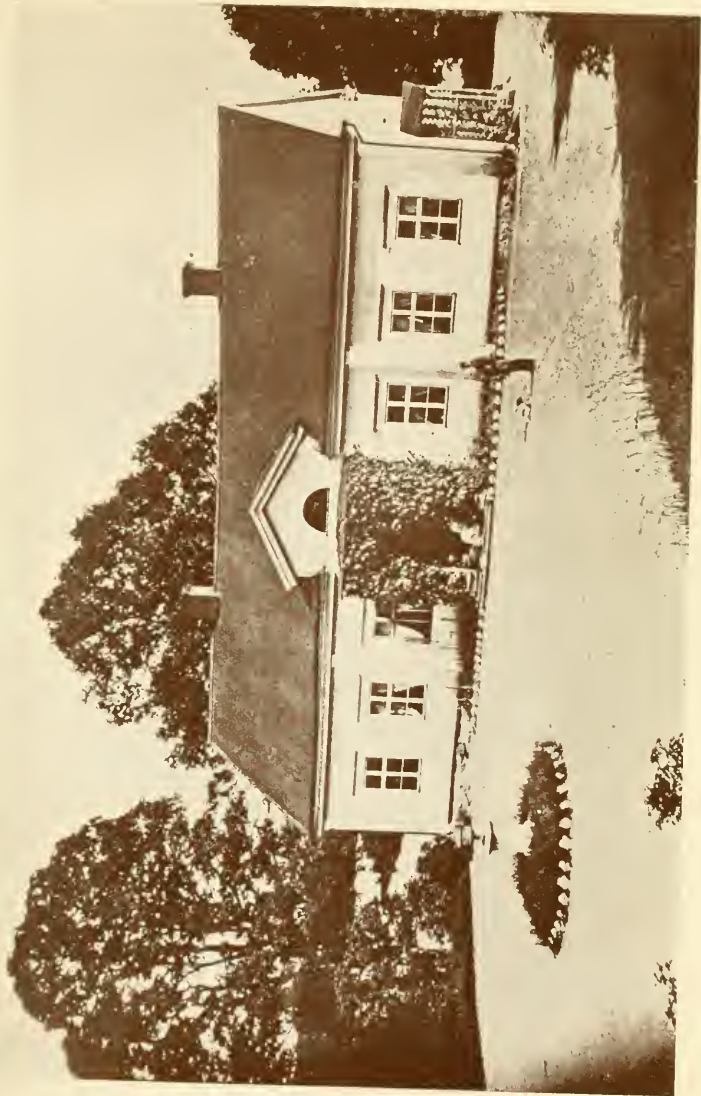
### CHILDHOOD AND EARLY YOUTH

SUNDSHOLM is situated in one of the most beautiful districts in Southern Sweden. The Lake Maren encircles the point of land on which Sundsholm's *corps de logis* is located. From this, a fine alley of unusually tall and handsome pyramid-poplars leads across blossoming meadows. Near by, is a natural park of oak, birch, and evergreen trees, which Emil Key's love of beauty had created with very simple means. The landscape varies with large meadows, birch and oak, and, in the background, a great pine forest, now a memory only. Through the broad foliage of the aristolochia, which covered the front porch where the family usually gathered, one had a charming view. At midsummer, the last rays of the sun could be seen through a break in the forest. From a hill in the park, one had a fine view of the whole Lake Maren, with all its coves and points. From this height, one also saw the

great forests of the district, untouched at that time, and a white glimmering point, the lighthouse, two miles distant, on the coast of the Baltic, inspiring in the young a yearning for the sea.

The interior of Sundsholm was very different from ordinary Swedish homes of that day. The æsthetic and literary father had arranged all with exquisite taste. The black Gothic silk furniture in the drawing-room had once been in the possession of the celebrated actress Emilie Högquist, and the walls were hung with valuable pictures. A precious collection of engravings, and a large and excellent library were rich sources from which the daughter Ellen, thirsting for knowledge, could help herself. The advantages of high culture were here combined with simple habits and hard work.

Besides her own home, there were three others from which Ellen Key received impressions in childhood and youth that set their stamp on her character and mind. One was the stately old mansion Björnö, situated on the Sound, two miles from Kalmar, which, together with several other estates, belonged to Ellen's maternal grandfather, who had renovated and built them up, laying out



THE BIRTHPLACE OF ELLEN KEY. SUNDSHOLM



many miles of new roads, modernizing everything, and changing the old system of land rentals, so hard on the tenants.

Count Posse was the largest landowner and magnate of the county, a proud and stern gentleman, but yielding as wax towards his wife, Sophie Berg von Linde, and his first grandchild, Ellen Key. The customs and habits of olden times reigned at Björnö, even as late as 1850. After the early dinner, the family would gather, about six o'clock, around the tea-table (as at the beginning of the century), which was lighted by dripping candles set in massive silver candlesticks.

In this home the well-filled linen chests held damask cloths spun by the Countess and her daughters, and one of Ellen's gifts from her grandmother was a little spinning-wheel, but neither it nor the lace-making pillow was put to use by Ellen Key.

Both in summer and winter the guests were many, but the supply in the store-room never gave out. This large room, of two compartments, seemed to Ellen's imagination a "Hanseatic Store." There was ever an odour of all kinds of condiments and all sorts of edible delicacies.

Count Posse loved to build, and Ellen de-

clares that she had inherited from her grandfather her passion for solid buildings. He also made his own drawings of substantial and useful furniture.

He did not care for display, yet an old-fashioned splendour always showed itself, not the least in the black four-in-hand which was always used in driving the family and their guests. He worshipped his wife, and vowed at eighty that he had never seen a more beautiful woman. When he was absent during the War of 1813, his wife sent him a heart-locket of silver, containing locks of her own and their firstborn's hair. The only arrangement he made, concerning his obsequies, was that this remembrance of the love of his youth should accompany him to his grave. Ellen Key received her earliest historic impressions from the many large steel engravings of the War of 1813, which hung on the walls in her grandfather's room, and the first historic name she dreamt about was Napoleon.

The grandmother was a tall and remarkably handsome woman, with a soul of "pure goodness." She taught the four-year-old Ellen to read from large charts, after the method of the day. The lessons were made so pleasant, through the graciousness of the teacher, that

to this day happy memories are recalled by the grateful pupil. One of Ellen Key's ineffaceable impressions is of her grandmother giving her a toy after Ellen had been cross to her without reason. The heart of the five-year-old melted with gratitude and regret, and this experience was the foundation of Ellen Key's belief that children may be won by kindness rather than punishment.

At Helgerum, a lovely old manor on a bay of the Baltic Sea, one hour's journey from Sundsholm, lived Ellen Key's only paternal aunt, the spiritual and richly gifted Baroness Marie-Louise Raab, *née* Key. Here in the magnificent rotund music-room, which rose through two stories, Ellen Key would often enjoy music, or listen to her aunt by the fire telling of old times and people, a reminiscence which she relates in her *Beauty for All*. In the drawing-room with the painted hangings she would dream of herself sharing in the dramatic scenes of Racine's *Esther*, pictures that were the delight of her early years.

In the near neighbourhood of Sundsholm, and belonging to it, was Kallernäs. The simple, old-fashioned, red-painted house, which was reached by rowing across a little sound, and walking through the loveliest birch-grown

point, was tenanted by Captain Måns Hultin, his wife and children. The youngest daughter, Lisa, was born the same year as Ellen, and the two girls have been friends from infancy.

At Björnö, Ellen learned to reverence the good old things and customs in an aristocratic and patriarchal home, a reverence which is often expressed in her writings. These influences of olden times were strengthened at Kallernäs. The lasting impressions Ellen Key received from this home are countless. She has written of Fru Hultin with grateful appreciation. The rare old-fashioned atmosphere has never faded from Ellen's memory and, especially the fairy-tales and harpsichord music of Fru Hultin, did much to nourish the child's imagination.

The old couple lived to celebrate their diamond wedding, dying in 1883, the same year that the Key family left Sundsholm. Ellen Key ends her biographical sketch of Fru Hultin with these words: "In this existence of ours, where our life experiences are for the most part made up of yearnings and disappointments, it is only for those who have never disappointed our trust that we always yearn. These personalities, who stand out in unsullied purity against the golden back-



ground of our memories, are our true benefactors.”

Now that we have become acquainted with the environment in which Ellen Key was born and grew up, it remains for us to follow her through her simple and uneventful life—as far as external happenings go—to try to find and comprehend her personality, as it shows itself in her work and in her writings, and to recognise inherited as well as acquired traits, influences of education, environment, and circumstances.

“I was born at Sundsholm, the eleventh of December, 1849, the first child of young and happy parents.” With these, her own words, Ellen Key lets us know she is a “love-child” in the most beautiful meaning of the word. The significance which she attaches to this fact, upheld in her view for that matter by well-known scientific authorities, is expressed in her *Century of the Child*, and doubtless her warm life-faith is due in some degree to the happy circumstance of her birth.

The first story I ever heard of Ellen Key was that as a tiny little girl she defended her one-year-younger sister who was being scolded because she lay crying in her crib. Prompted by the same motherliness, which later brought

her into bitter conflict with so many bigoted opponents, little Ellen put herself protectively in front of the baby, saying: "She is so little, she tan't help it."

In the preface to her recently published book *Lifslinier*, she relates her own earliest remembrance "of the first time she felt conscious of the joy of living." She had been entrusted with the care of the little sister who was unable alone to climb the hill near the home, and it made her serenely happy to feel the little hand in hers and the sun shining on them both.

Ellen's fifth year was spent wholly at Björnö. Even at this early age she loved books. And, when the older people read aloud the then newly translated English novels, *The Lamp-lighter*, *Jane Eyre*, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, etc., Ellen would creep under the table and listen while they thought she was playing. She always amused herself, and did not need companions to have a good time. Her play with dolls was not like other daughters of Eve who prefer them stylishly attired, and thus prepare themselves to become dolls of fashion. No, Ellen wanted a *real* baby. A pin-cushion served as a head, and heavy towels were twisted to form the body. Ellen's doll should be

heavy and cause her sweet toil to carry about! She took even her doll-play seriously, a play which soon ended, as she came to have five younger sisters and brothers who were better to pet and care for than the dolls. In a photograph of her at the age of six, this disposition can be recognised. A dear little one, but already then a thoughtful "little mother."

Ellen Key never became tiresome in her seriousness, she had too much humour and roguishness for that, which showed itself early in her ready wit and funny sayings. When she was only four years old, her grandfather, who loved horses, put her on a pony. When the pony threw her, she kept her countenance, explaining the incident thus: "Myggan (as the pony was called) took down her will from the damper,"<sup>1</sup> that being the place where, according to prevalent custom, she had been told that her own will sat.

Like other country-bred children Ellen drove and rode horseback, swam and rowed, and often, when the stars mirrored themselves in

<sup>1</sup> Swedish children are generally told that they have no will of their own while they are young: they must simply obey their elders. They are told that their will is growing on the top of some tree in the forest, or living in the damper, which, on the customary fireplace is very high near the ceiling and is regulated only by the elders of the household.—Translator's footnote.

the clear ice, or, better still, when the moon shone, she would glide away on skates at a merry pace. But storytelling and books came first among her earliest pleasure.

Ellen Key considers one of the fortunate assets of her childhood the nurse with her inexhaustible store of folk-tales, which she would delightfully recount to the children gathered before the fire. When Ellen was eight years old she would get out of bed, and listen at the door to her parents reading Rydberg's *Last Athenian*, and afterwards she acted the story with her paper dolls. At this age, Runeberg also became dear to her. She knew his *Fänrik Stål* almost by heart and had soon read everything he had so far written. She listened eagerly to her old friend, Captain Hultin's recital of his hunting and fishing trips with Runeberg during a visit to Finland, and her first experience of grief came at the tidings of Runeberg's death. She passed the day in tears, and shortly afterwards she began to hold weekly "Runeberg-Evenings," in which she gathered her sisters and brothers for reading. It is characteristic of Ellen Key that, at ten years of age, she greatly enjoyed epic poems such as Runeberg's *Älgskyttarne* and Goethe's *Hermann und Doro-*

*thea.* We have it from her own lips that when she read this poem for the second time at sixteen, kneeling by the window to catch the last light of the day, as it grew too dark, without moving from the spot she reached for the candle, and, lighting it, kept on reading on her knees, finishing without interruption the whole poem, which expressed, as it were, her own early love of the wholesome, harmonious life. Her first thought of love had been awakened through her reading of Tegnér's *Axel och Maria* which she carried in her pocket all winter, and learned by heart at the age of seven. But her own dream of Love was quite idyllic. Her own home should be a country estate where everything would be arranged as perfectly as possible, from cellar to attic, and all the tenants happy with their own pretty cottages and gardens. And she would have two boys and two girls, both wondrously beautiful, and brought up only in love! On the brown wall-paper by her bed she had sketched the contours of her kingdom, a little "Utopia" in which she fancied herself riding about in a white dress on a white pony,—symbols of the peace that would reign,—to lighten taxes, found schools, promote industries, make all officials just, and all soldiers

gentle! Little Ellen learned through her historic readings to dream of the ideals which early became the objects of her desires.

A realised harmony of life—this was what she unconsciously enjoyed in the epic poems mentioned. This harmony had already filled her imagination in childhood, and all her books deal more or less with this dream, which she still—a child with whitening locks—dreams for others with the same tender eagerness.

At other times, her love of adventure would crop out, and then there would be Indian games under Ellen's direction, adventures of Robinson Crusoe, etc. Historic scenes would be played, such as the Departure of the People of Israel from Egypt, the Sacrifice of the Easter-Lamb, the Citizens of Calais, parts of the life of Gustavus Vasa, and others. She had come across Socrates in her books of history! From him, who became her ideal when she was eight or ten years old, she learned that the fewer his wants the nearer man grows to the gods. And so this little personality had within herself a principle which justified the parental commands she must obey, since the simple upbringing which, to the democratic tendencies of the parents, seemed best for the children, accorded with her own

stoic ideals! Not satisfied, she put additional rules for herself and carried simplified living farther even than her parents required. She was so hardened that she was hard in her youth, and it is with effort she has learned to have an easy conscience in regard to the enjoyment of the good things of life.

Ellen Key was brought up in extreme simplicity. Until she was twelve years old she ate her breakfast and suppers standing with her sisters and brothers at a table where only bread and milk was served. No waiting on the children was allowed. The servants had been told that if the children gave orders, they should be led out of the kitchen with the dishrag around their necks. Ellen herself tells us that she was sixteen years old before she opened her lips at table without being spoken to. Complaints were considered squeamish, and no phrase was heard oftener than: "He who enters the game must endure the play," and that teaching, Ellen Key says, laid the foundation for the endurance with which she has been able to meet the pain and attacks she has suffered. Besides the desire to create happiness, which is one of the fundamental traits of her character—and in her youthful



fancy took the form of a little Utopia—we find a growing individualism discernible already in childhood and expressing itself in a love of the genuine. Just as she wanted her doll to be a real baby, so she wanted Christianity to be real and without compromise, and love to be genuine, not the dull everyday kind, not the little “loves,” but the great, strong Love, that could fill the whole life. Even in her little daily doings she tried to realise this principle. She has related that she thought that “needlework was horrid,” the first time she sewed a hem, and that, when she was her own master, she would never busy herself with it—a vow that she has faithfully kept! But it is significant that, during the years that she had to assist in the home-sewing, her one comfort was to do it *well*. Ellen’s seams were famous in the family for not ripping easily, and her brothers always preferred her to do their sewing, because “she was the only woman who knew how to fasten a seam.”

Music attracted her strongly from her earliest years, and she would leave any game to listen to it. Then, as now, she loved to hide herself in some dark corner where she would be undisturbed by other impressions, and could let the power of the music have full sway over



her. She regretted bitterly her inability to sing, and she also struggled in vain to make the piano express her feelings. At the age of twenty, she gave up her attempts at playing. She also gave up drawing after some years of study, for, although she was not devoid of talents here, she did not consider them great enough to warrant the necessary time and labour. Her colour sense showed itself early in her arrangement of flowers, and this part of the home decorations was given her to do from childhood.

She learned to dance simply through listening to the music, and she is said to have danced well. But she had always declared she would stop when she was twenty-five years old, and she did. Now in her old age the desire to dance has returned, and when with intimate friends she sometimes takes a turn in an old waltz.

When between twelve and fourteen years of age Ellen became melancholy, because of the lack of harmony in life, because of the ugliness and injustice that reigned in the world, because "God was not," and everything "went wrong." Tegnér's *Mjeltsjukan*<sup>1</sup> was now the

<sup>1</sup> Literal translation—spleen-sickness, otherwise melancholy.—Translator's footnote.

poem that appealed to her as giving expression to her own mood. Tegnér, Runeberg, and Nikander were her favourite poets during these years. At that time she little dreamed that she herself would write. It was under the influence of Almqvist, Geijer, and Björnson, the "deeply beloved" poets of her twenty-year period, that she began to think of writing—sketches of peasant life—and made extensive studies with this object in view. The clear-sightedness of her mother, however, saved her from wasting time in a direction in which her talents did not lie. The mother's words, that "Ellen was too introspective, too little interested in, or observant of, the diversity of life," were decisive for her. Ellen deeply felt the truth of this, and with her eyes thus opened to her limitations she came to understand that the soul, its life, condition, and growth, was even then the great question for her. Therefore she began to concentrate her mind on this problem.

Individualist from birth as Ellen Key had been, she may not always have been easy to handle and to understand. She had a mind of her own. Her love for reading was so passionate that she believes herself capable of committing crimes to get books. She would take

without permission books denied her, and "therefore knows from experience that nothing tempts a book-hungry child more than refusals, which ought never to be made." This will power, which showed itself whenever she wanted to reach a desired goal, was absent in other cases. Her inability to be interested and systematic in the housewifely activities, which the practical and orderly mother expected of her, but which Ellen considered less important, caused conflicts which, in childhood, laid the basis for her later views on education. Her love of freedom and justice caused herself, as well as those who had the difficult task of guiding her, many hard moments. Fortunately for Ellen, her mother early recognised the worth of her determined character, and confident that her trust was not misplaced, dared more and more to give her free rein in her development. "Self-realisation" was thus encouraged, and her individualism grew more pronounced.

On the whole Ellen used her freedom well. Though glad to be released from such duties as antagonised her nature, she would with ease perform others, which for most people were more difficult. There may be recounted a little nursery-episode which at first glance may

strike the reader as rather insignificant, but which holds much of importance for the characterisation of her personality. It concerns her relation to her sisters and brothers. When any sweetmeats were to be shared between them, their supreme trust in her was shown by their general cry in chorus: "Let Ellen divide, then it will be just." Though quite aware of the fact that Ellen had precedence over them in the eyes of the parents, it at no time inspired them to envy, either then or later. They loved her dearly because she used her position in the family to their advantage. May not the assistance Ellen gave her mother and the home in this way, more than outweigh the help she might have given with a needle in her hand had she been an ordinary, good, and dutiful daughter?

Another example of the impression Ellen made on her associates is related by her childhood's friend, Lisa Hultin. The two little girls had discovered a patch of delicious wild strawberries. They were enjoying them to their hearts' content when Lisa noticed that Ellen gave her the largest berries and wanted to know the reason for this. "Because I know that you would have given me the best if you had found them," was the



ELLEN KEY, AGED 15.



ELLEN KEY, 1856.

FROM A SILHOUETTE.



answer. This naïve credulity, which makes her expect from others the same nobility characteristic of herself, to believe the best of people and interpret their actions in the best possible light, has ever caused her many disappointments.

To strengthen her naturally somewhat delicate constitution Ellen spent four summers on the west coast before she was eleven years old. The sea made a deep impression on her. There she felt she could breathe freely, she wanted to live her life on the sea, and wished to become a sailor! Thus, the little girl dreamed, and this love of the sea has remained with the matured woman and has made her yearn to grow old near it and actually die in it.

Not for nought was Don Quixote one of the friends of her childhood; he had moved her to tears oftener than to laughter.

Ellen Key never went to school in the ordinary sense, although during the year of her confirmation she was a boarder in a private school in Stockholm, and attended lessons in special subjects for two semesters. Together with her Swedish schooling she had been fortunate enough to have, from the age of six, a German teacher, and a native French

teacher at fourteen, through whom she grew familiar with these languages in her childhood. Grammar and arithmetic were stumbling-blocks to her. The mother, who was Ellen's teacher in these branches during the first years, was not acquainted with the newer ideas of pedagogy and child psychology, and therefore could not understand that a child might find one subject hard and another easy. Consequently she tried with severe means to cure what she considered nothing but obstinacy—a method of education which grounded Ellen's abhorrence of every kind of forcible upbringing.

She learned her lessons at the last moment, and she generally knew them well, when she understood them at all. But, she, herself, declares that she was quite devoid of ambition, and that no prospect of praise could induce her to leave an interesting book for the sake of studying her lessons. And she thinks that her brain, with a true instinct for self-preservation, forgot all that did not interest her.

Although she has later filled the gaps in her knowledge, she considers herself ignorant in everything, which does not, in one way or another, refer to *human life*—that is, history, literature, and sociology. In languages the correct phrases and shade of expression come



easy to her in talking and writing, but she never can learn them grammatically. If, for example, you speak of relative subordinate clause, or dependent clause in the Swedish language, she declares that in her humble opinion you are "humbugging," for she has never understood any difference between them, and in her mind the conjunctions stand on just as shaky legs as the four simple rules of arithmetic. In writing, her language is determined only by her sense of style, and she rewrites all her manuscripts four, five, some pages even ten, twenty times, or until it sounds well to her ear. Except for this shortcoming in grammatical knowledge she would have been even a greater literary artist.

The home-life at Sundsholm was secluded, and spent in serious occupations. There were no neighbours except those already mentioned, and young people's parties, with dances and excursions, were of rare occurrence, as were amusements in the ordinary sense. One gets the impressions that the cultured father lived chiefly for his literary and political interests, and the mother with him, while the children lived their own life.

However lacking the mother may have been in pedagogical insight, she had a true comprehension of her eldest daughter, and recognised her individual turn of mind. Both mother and father encouraged her intellectual development. Unusual freedom was allowed her early by her parents. The mother gave her Camilla Collett's *Amtmannen's döttrar* (The Prefect's Daughters) when she was thirteen years old. This story and other novels of good English authors—particularly those of Miss Muloch—made so deep an impression on the young girl, that her conceptions of love were formed on the same pattern of earnestness and genuineness which she has always worshipped in great and small things. She grew to womanhood without being troubled by such influences as often disturb adolescence. Silly talk, coquetry, and foolish ideas did not occupy her mind, filled as it was with dreams of love of a deeper kind. Even as a child she was interested in the larger human questions.

Her great-grandmother had a volume of portraits from the Crimean War which interested the six-year-old so much that the book was given her. Garibaldi inspired her enthusiasm at the age of eight and ten, as Poland's struggle for freedom did at thirteen and four-

teen. Then came the Danish War, and, when her father's half-brother, Hugo Raab, went out as a volunteer he made a visit to Sundsholm. With feelings of pride as well as sorrow the family bade him farewell, following with throbbing hearts the progress of the war in which Raab's regiment of volunteers took an honourable part. Hugo Raab, later renowned as a reformer of the General Staff, early taught Ellen to combine her love of peace with a respect for an enlightened defence.

She always listened with breathless interest to a serious conversation. Society did not attract her on account of her excessive shyness, and her first ball opened with tears because she was made to appear in a gown slightly *décolleté*.

It was of great importance for the full development of this dreaming, introspective, and thoughtful girl that, through the comprehensive forethought of her mother, she had her own room from the time she was twelve. She was given a nest of her very own, a gable room with blue walls and her own furniture, a little white writing desk which had been her grandfather's, a rocker presented her at the age of four, and a bookcase, also a

gift of the grandfather. From her window, she had a close view of the lake with its islands and of meadows of oak and birch. It was her great good fortune that she was allowed to live among books and nature and, awakened by the sunrise on summer mornings, to lie and listen to the singing of the birds, the lapping of the waves, and inhale the fragrance of the honeysuckle and linden blossoms through the open window.

"You see," she once wrote, "I am born for country and solitude; they nourish me. Social activity and fellow-feeling—I have acquired." Thanks to this training of herself, the imaginative and contemplative disposition, which Ellen Key another time calls her temptation, has not been allowed the upper hand.

She occupied this room from twelve until forty years of age. First uninterruptedly eight years—except the winter spent in Stockholm when she was confirmed—and after that during the summers. How happy she felt each time she arrived home from Stockholm! How intensely she worked, thought, and studied in this little room!

To herself may well be applied the words: "The born individualist has, even in the nursery, instinctively chosen his books, his mode

of work. . . . One filled with a passion to be wholly himself, to live in every nerve, to express his innermost being, may never have a calm, but ever a rich existence. To him life is a song, for he himself composes it during the work-a-day toil, the exaltation of the great moments, the years of suffering, and the hours of happiness. . . . Thus he will win, for himself and for others, new life-values, new life-incentives.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See *The Freedom of the Personality*.

## CHAPTER III

### YOUTH AND THE FIRST YEARS IN STOCKHOLM

WHEN Ellen Key was old enough to be confirmed and was sent to Stockholm for a course of instruction, she had already passed through a stage of personal religious development. In regard to this, she writes as follows: "I read the Bible as a 'storybook,' loved Jesus, knew my Catechism worst of all, listened to my father's reading of Martensen's sermons on Sundays, hated God ever since at ten I read of Jesus' suffering, and, after seeing a man die who ought to have lived, I denied Him and worshipped Nature alone."

Having thus been led to doubt God, because of the death of a young man whose wife and little children were left destitute, she wanted explicit proof of God's existence or non-existence. She wrote in the sand: "GOD IS DEAD," thinking that if He existed, He would send her a stroke of lightning or some other sure sign to punish her blasphemy. In *The*

*Century of the Child* she relates, how, after having waited in vain for some sign, she yet wished to give God respite, and said to herself: "If the words are still here in this secluded place to-morrow, then He is surely dead, but if He has erased them, He lives!" The following day the words were gone, but, thinking she saw traces of the gardener's rake, the uncertainty as to whether this or the finger of God had decided the question, continued. It is remarkable with what earnestness and desire for truth the ten-year-old child proceeds.

This restless seeking mood continued all through her early "teens." During the winter of 1864-65, which she spent in Stockholm on account of her confirmation, she lived in a religious home, where she was impressed "not by religious phrases, but by a truly religious life," and by the harmony and greatness of spirit it revealed. Through her association with Mina and Karin Åhlin, in whose school she was a boarder,—especially through the genial Mina—she came to realise the beauty of Christianity. "And so I became a Christian, and in deepest earnestness tried to live as a Christian, struggling ceaselessly against the demands of intellect, personality, and beauty."

All her Sundays, Christmas and Easter holidays were spent with her aunt and uncle, Count Sköldebrand, Governor of the Royal Palace. As she grew familiar with the beauty of the palace, her love for great architecture was aroused. Her lonely wanderings in what was then the Stone Museum in one of the wings of the palace—before the National Museum was built—nurtured her love of sculpture, which had already been awakened by the many Thorwaldsen works she had seen in the home, where even her mother's writing desk held bas-reliefs by that artist. Even at the age of seven, when she made her first visit to Thorwaldsen's Museum in Copenhagen, she greatly enjoyed the works of art familiar to her at home, and the gods and goddesses which she recognised from her reading of Greek mythology.

During the confirmation period there often flitted before her mind's eye, though yet vaguely, the problem which later occupied her so deeply, the possibility of a harmony between the Ancient and the Christian ideal.

Doctor Rothlieb, Ellen's religious instructor, was the idol of the day, and most of his pupils worshipped him. But neither he nor any other minister or teacher could find in Ellen



Key a pupil who would accept their instruction as a lamp to her feet. She has never stood in the personal relationship of pupil to master or had confidential intercourse with any living teacher, or confounded the man with his message, as women often do. From the dead, she has taken what she needed, and, on the whole, remained free.

The *Confessions of Augustine* put Christianity before her in its strictest requirements. Any easy compromise with the pleasant things in life was not to be thought of. It must be stern and genuine Christianity. Ellen Key was now a believer, though her mental conflicts were severe. She was much inclined to dreaming and inactivity. She preferred to bury herself in books, in peace and quiet, and here, as in nature, she sought to understand life and herself. The service of love among the sick and poor, which Christianity urged upon her, was extremely difficult for one of her temperament. And yet, she told herself that just this service was what Jesus expected of his true disciples. And how dared she call herself one, she who could not even bear to look at a small wound, much less overcome horror and loathing for Christ's sake? And the works of art and beauty which she adored,

were they always in harmony with Christianity? Thus she pondered in her mind.

Her mother had planned to have Ellen teach her youngest sister and a playmate of the same age. Immediately upon her arrival home from Stockholm, the fifteen-year-old girl took up this work, fully conscious of the responsibility involved. I once heard Ellen Key tell of the joyful anticipation with which, while yet in Stockholm, she prepared herself for this task, thinking with what motherly tenderness she would care for the little sister who was six years her junior. From the other pupil, Miss Ada Rydström, I have the highest testimony of Ellen's pedagogical power, already developed at that time. "Ineradicable impressions were made on the child-mind by her teachings. We felt great respect for her, though at the same time we much enjoyed our lessons." The religious development of this former pupil later took a different direction from that of Ellen Key's, yet her opinion of Ellen's character, her purity and nobility of mind, remains unchanged. She also speaks of Ellen's love of nature, of her leisure moments spent in woods and fields. No one was allowed to know the solitary places which were her chosen haunts.

The Swedish religious lyricists, Stagnelius, Atterbom, and Topelius, were at this age her favourite poets. Her feeling towards Nature was very romantic during this period; Nature was personified.

It is probable that she had already learned the virtue of that "Stillness," of which she speaks so feelingly in one of her essays, and which she later so often sought for herself in remote and secluded places.

When Ellen was in her seventeenth year, a tragedy determined her life's philosophy. Two young women, cousins of Ellen's, visiting at Sundsholm, were drowned while bathing, and Ellen herself barely escaped. Religious emotions now filled her completely, and for years she struggled with the problem of a Christian view of life, and the philosophy, which later put its stamp on all her words and actions, slowly matured within her. To the deep-thinking, truth-seeking Ellen, who had seen her two friends snatched from life in a few seconds, their spiritual state not at all what Christianity required as essential to their salvation, the question of eternal bliss and punishment became the vital problem in life. She wrote whole packs of "journals" during the following ten years, which journals reflect the

gradual progress of her development so entirely without the influence of so-called heretical writings. She never read Victor Rydberg, for instance, until after she had, of her own accord, abandoned her belief in the Divinity of Christ. Alone she sought light. For edification during these years she read the Bible, Colain's *Meditations*, and the sermons of the Englishman Robertson, which she re-read many times. The works of Renan, Parker, and Ignell were in her father's library, but, not believing it right to subject herself to *ex-parte* influence, she did not read them. She never attended the "Lord's Supper" after her first communion, feeling, even at eighteen, that she could not fully participate in that act. After twenty, she also refused to act as sponsor at the baptism of infants, as their christening seemed to her to be blasphemy. Gradually her heart became severed from Christianity, and yet, up to the age of nearly forty, she still clung to the thought of a personal God, and a personal immortality.

It was not until more than thirty years after the tragedy related, and when she had been attacked for radicalism and unbelief, that Ellen Key felt it to be a duty and a right to herself and to others openly to confess her

breach with Christianity, and to declare her reasons for it.

In Ellen Key's home there was the same aversion to class prejudices and class pretensions as prevailed among all Liberals preceding the change in the system of representation, which change principally resulted in the abrogation of the nobleman's right of rule in the Riksdag. Consequently their high pedigree had no place in the children's imagination, and they never heard any talk conducive to family pride. Ellen once wrote: "I inherited no prejudice from my father or mother, and I have never heard from them anything but respect for human life, for liberty, labour, and progress." Ellen yet had as a child such a passion for all family-history, even in the meagre form of the *Peerage Calendar* and *Swedish Genealogy*, that she eagerly perused these and pondered the fates of the people narrated therein. When, later, as a young girl,—about the time that the theory of evolution was beginning to prepare minds for the significance of heredity,—she learned of her ancestors, their romantic history filled her with pride. Harald Hårfager, for instance, had united the many small kingdoms of Norway

for the love of Princess Gyda, who had made this the condition of marrying him! That Karl VIII (Knutson) had been King of Sweden meant nothing to her, compared with the fact that he had so deeply loved his wife that the chronicle touchingly relates their happiness and his grief at her death. And Leonora Kristina Ulfeld had languished in prison forty years because of her loyalty to her beloved husband. Very proud was Ellen of her ancestor, the younger Sten Sture, and his wife, Kristina Gyllenstjerna, who in her dead husband's place had so bravely defended Stockholm's palace against the Danes. And she loved the story of their granddaughter, Malin Sture, and the latter's cousin, Erik Stenbock, who after years of faithful love ran away to become united, defying law and custom. Ebba Brahe, the beloved of Gustavus II (Adolphus), is another romantic character among the many that abound in Ellen Key's ancestry.

And Ellen heard of weird and wonderful personalities, not many generations removed from herself. Her paternal great-grandmother, as a widow, contracted a romantic marriage with one Lautier, said to have been an Italian pirate. Her maternal great-grandmother was,

in her time, the much talked of "Night-Countess," who slept by day and rode out with torches and four black horses by night—a haughty and imperious lady!

A kinsman and foster-brother of Ellen's grandfather, one Count Posse, had married Princess Canino, niece of Napoleon I, also a romantic love-union.

The glamour of tragic love hung over Stäflö, one of the grandfather's estates. There, a German princess, Dorothea von Zettvitz, had lived many years, a fugitive, because of love, from the small German Court of the eighteenth century where she had spent her youth.

All these romantic associations have played their part in Ellen Key's mental and emotional world, which from childhood was influenced by the conception of the greatness and significance of love. She had then "fallen in love with love," as she once so quaintly wrote.

Ellen Key's nearest of kin, her paternal and maternal grandparents as well as her own parents, had all experienced love and happiness in marriage. Thus we find her born and bred in the consciousness of great love as of the highest value to life.

When she was eighteen years old, her mother

x I loved not yet, and I found to love  
I sought what I might be in love  
with love —  
—



gave her three books of Ibsen: *The Comedy of Love*, *Brand*, and *Peer Gynt*. The choice of this gift is especially characteristic of both giver and receiver. Although Ibsen, in 1868, was already known as a great writer, he was not generally read in Sweden. But Sophie Key had not allowed the many duties of a large household in the country to deaden her intelligence, or to stifle her broad interests in literature and life. With keen insight into her daughter's development, she now introduced her to Ibsen. What effect his works had on Ellen, particularly *The Comedy of Love*, she has herself related in her *Tankebilder* (*Thought Images*). Though ill at the time, she unconsciously learned almost the whole play by heart. Her fevered imagination was filled with its characters, and her recovery was retarded because the brain had no respite from the sting of the sharp retorts. She says: "Ibsen's deepest pathos met me on a larger scale in *Brand* and *Peer Gynt*, but . . . my innermost instincts had prepared a perfect concurrence with his high idealism in *The Comedy of Love*."

We must hold fast the picture of Ellen Key at eighteen, overwhelmed with grief at the disclosure of society's half-heartedness, at the insincerity of all the world, in the presence



of tragedy-comedy, if we are to understand how, in later years, with acquired gentleness, she goes so far as to contradict her own life-ideal by a tolerance probably too great.

It is obvious that the blood coursing in her veins, and making her heart beat more passionately than is the common lot, she has inherited from strong, vital personalities, who did not trudge the dull path of commonplace existence, but lived rich and unusual lives.

Thus we find that only after decades of thought and study, did Ellen Key, at a mature age, enter the arena to fight the marriage institution, as it exists at present, "which, with its proprietary rights, has converted the tenderest expression of personal liberty into life-imprisonment, where the highest possibility of life-joy is changed into a shelter for life-loathing."

But before she appeared as a writer on this and similar subjects, her powers had been engaged in quite other spheres.

## CHAPTER IV

### REMOVAL OF THE FAMILY TO STOCKHOLM

THE path of Ellen Key's life goes straight and true toward the goal which she had unconsciously chosen for herself as a child. The road leading to development of individuality has been her highway. Effort and labour it has cost, but she reached the goal. Curiously enough, we find that, at the ages of twenty, thirty, forty, and fifty, there were certain circumstances in Ellen's life which greatly helped to determine her development. Thus when she reached her twentieth year she moved with her parents to Stockholm for the winters because of the father's participation in the Riksdag.

A rich field was thus opened for the girl thirsting for knowledge. She studied diligently at the library, and attended lectures, of which those by Professor Dietrichson at the Academy of Art especially interested her. In a gathering of women she heard Pontus

Wikner,<sup>1</sup> and later listened to Gustaf Björklund<sup>2</sup> on the philosophy of Boström.<sup>3</sup> These thinkers, however, did not engross her mind so much as did Spencer, Mill, Darwin, Taine, Brandes, and Max Müller.

She came in personal touch with Fru Sophie Adlersparre, whose *Tidskrift för Hemmet* (*Home Journal*) had strongly influenced her since childhood, and had made her an eager adherent of the movement for the liberation of women; though her own position held no pathos, she recognised that of others. She herself had received, as a gift, the freedom for which others must battle.

Fru Adlersparre, who was always glad to discover and use young talent, encouraged Ellen to write for her journal, and, besides reports of lectures, translations, and reviews of books, Ellen Key now began to contribute original articles.

It is not likely that she would have come before the public of her own accord, as neither

<sup>1</sup> Pontus Wikner, Swedish philosopher.—Translator's footnote.

<sup>2</sup> Gustaf Björklund, prominent in the International Peace Movement and author of *Death and Immortality*, translated into English and published by the Open Court Publishing Company.—Translator's footnote.

<sup>3</sup> C. J. Boström, the foremost philosopher of Sweden.—Translator's footnote.

ambition nor initiative can be counted among her traits.

For a number of years she was a student in the Misses Rossander's School of Instruction for Women; later becoming a teacher there in geography, and where she gave her first regular lecture on her beloved Geijer.<sup>1</sup> Here she also learned to know Anna Whitlock<sup>2</sup> and Julia Kjellberg, later married to the socialist von Vollmar, two friends with whom she has ever since kept in close touch.

Ellen Key's love of the soil, of the childhood-home, soon grew to embrace her whole native land. The feeling of patriotism waxed strong within her.

The day following the memorable December night when, after decades of obstinate struggle, the representation by Four Classes ceased, and the new system of Two Houses was adopted, Sophie Key and her daughter Ellen attended an evening party, and heard their friends on every hand deplore the outcome, while they alone rejoiced. Ellen, at this time not quite sixteen, was so deeply moved that,

<sup>1</sup> A great Swedish poet.—Translator's footnote.

<sup>2</sup> Now well known as a pedagogue, and also prominent in the Woman Movement.—Translator's footnote.

on arriving home, she went out alone under the starlit heaven, and made a compact with her own heart that she would serve the people in her own humble way, and help them to a worthy use of their new privileges in the great work now begun. Her patriotism from its first conscious awakening was that of a democrat. She once wrote: "There is one general human feeling which I have never shared, and that is royalism. I have been a republican ever since I first learned that countries were governed, and read about Rome and Athens. The enthusiasm others have expended on royalty, I have spent on heroes, on the great Greeks and Romans, on our own great kings, Gustavus I (Vasa) and Gustavus II (Adolphus), but never Charles XII.

We have seen the important part Ellen's father played for a long course of years in the political life of Sweden. By his side, the romantic, dreaming girl looked into practical politics as did few Swedish women of that day. She shared in her father's plans, successes, and struggles. Emil Key was guided in his political activity by great reform ideas, and progress and reform were being discussed constantly in the Key home. Herr Key got more and more in the habit of sharing his work with

his daughter, who became his private secretary, sometimes writing original articles for *Dagens Nyheter* (*The Daily News*). As those of her father's dictation were also in her handwriting, the editor took for granted that all were the work of Emil Key. Style and contents seemed equally good in all. This proves how thoroughly familiar Ellen had made herself with the questions at issue, otherwise she could not have shown such practical knowledge of affairs and insight into existing political conditions.

During those early years in Stockholm, when Ellen Key lived there with her parents, they had an apartment in the Bondeska Palatset at Rosenbad. When this old relic of the aristocratic grandeur of Sweden was torn down recently, the following appeared in one of the papers of the capital: "This house also was inhabited, during the Riksdag sessions, by the old veteran of the House of Knights, Adam Christian Raab, father of Hugo Raab, first chief of the General Staff, and step-father of Emil Key, Liberal Speaker in the Riksdag. He himself was a liberal-minded man, and the standard-bearers of the new times often gathered in his home for lively debates and hot discussions of the questions of the day. Those were times

when the noble old walls resounded with the eloquent orations for freedom which sprang from the lips of August Blanche, August Sohlman and Karl Fredrik Ridderstad . . . while young Ellen Key by her father's side sat gazing at the contestants with large, wondering eyes, in which was the prophecy of the truth-teller of the future."

We have had many opportunities of witnessing the unfeigned pleasure of the old Liberals at finding Ellen Key among the invited guests at social functions in the eighties. Then, as always in large companies, she preferred listening to talking, taking a lively part in conversation only in small and intimate circles. She has never been a brilliant personage in society circles.

The vow to live for the enlightenment of the people, which she had made to herself that December night in 1865, gradually found its expression in work among the peasants. She had renewed this vow in the forest, by a rock which became her altar, and without further preliminaries, eager to start in at once, she found the simple means of beginning by taking up the work nearest at hand, that of making herself useful in her immediate surroundings.

At twenty, she had begun holding "Sunday-school" for the young people on the estate during the summers, which the family still always spent at Sundsholm, and here she taught history, natural science, literature, etc., and loaned out books from the little "Folk-library" she had herself founded by adding some new volumes to her own old books. From girlhood, and long before the movement for the education of the masses had become the fashion, Ellen Key had busied herself in such work, giving of her working time as well as her leisure hours. Alone, she dwelt with thoughts which, when she later expressed them in print, she was accused of having borrowed from abroad!

When Ellen was a few years past twenty, she received an offer to begin as a teacher, and later become principal of a Folk-high-school for girls in Skåne, in which some of her father's senatorial friends were interested. With this position in view, she spent the summer of 1874 in Denmark, studying the foremost schools of that kind, principally those of Vallekilde, Testrup, and Askov. When Ellen, in her own profound way, had thoroughly inspected these important institutions, she came to the conclusion that she was too



young to accept so responsible a position, especially as she had not yet reached any clear view as to the religious problems which filled her mind. But her dream and endeavour, from this time on, was to found a Folk-highschool for girls in her own home county, and for years she studied and laboured in preparation for this. She associated closely with the peasants trying to get a true understanding of their view of life, their customs, and habits. She collected sagas, folk-tales, and proverbs, embracing the opportunity at the same time to collect old-fashioned articles of peasant make for Arthur Hazelius,<sup>1</sup> whose new movement for a National Folk Museum deeply interested her.

Ellen's visit to the Folk-highschools in Denmark was made as the result of the above-mentioned offer, and also because the great importance of such institutions had been impressed upon her, as upon other Swedes, by Björnstjerne Björnson in his lectures in Stockholm, in December, 1872, and January, 1873; on Grundtvig, Vergeland, the Sistine Chapel, etc. Ellen had attended every lecture and afterwards written them

<sup>1</sup> Founder of Skansen, the out-door Museum and National Park at Stockholm.—Translator's footnote.

down from memory, as well as everything Björnson had said on occasions when she had met him; and she lived in a new world of inspiration. She, who always believed that her mother overrated her when she had urged her to "exercise her talents," now learned that Björnson had said to the mother that Ellen would be an honour to her parents, though he could not tell what her life-work might be, her extreme shyness making him uncertain as to whether she would ever dare to use her "Evne" (power). What he did know, however, was that she ought first of all to be a wife and make some one happy, but, he added, "Women with such rich inner life are seldom understood by men, and to a woman who, at the age of twenty-three, has not yet herself been in love, love will some day come with tremendous seriousness." That Björnson believed in her seemed wonderful to Ellen, and she promised to try not to disappoint him. He had said that he would always keep in touch with her. And the friendship thus begun lasted through life. Notwithstanding the strong influence of Björnson, who then was a Grundtvigian,<sup>1</sup> Ellen Key remained averse to Grundtvigianism.

<sup>1</sup> Member of the religious body denominated Grundtvigians after Grundtvig, the Danish liberal divine, who was publicly

vigianism. It seemed to her to illustrate the untenability of any compromise between Christianity and absolute Liberalism.

The following year in Stockholm, she met Magdalen Thoresen.<sup>1</sup> A friendship which lasted for life sprang up between them, and Ellen Key often went to Copenhagen to visit Magdalen, who retained her attractiveness and beauty of spirit even in her old age.

Between thirty and forty, Ellen made other journeys important to her development. She attended the World's Fair in Vienna in 1873 with her father, who went abroad for the purpose of studying Reform Schools and Children's Asylums in the interest of Norregård, Kalmar, an institution of similar kind, of which he was executor after his father-in-law, Count Posse. During these visits Ellen Key conceived a hatred for all kinds of institutions for children.

In Berlin, Dresden, Vienna, Venice, Florence, Paris, London, and Cassel the glories of art met Ellen's eyes. Her mind was well prepared by her own readings, as well as by the series of art lectures she had attended in

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prosecuted in Copenhagen because of his boldly expressed opinions on theological subjects.—Translator's footnote.

<sup>1</sup> Danish-Norwegian author and stepmother to Ibsen's wife.—Translator's footnote.

Stockholm, and also by her art-loving father's descriptions of his travels in youth. About Raphael's Sistine Madonna she says: "My father's impassioned descriptions, together with an old woodcut I have had from childhood, made an impersonal judgment impossible for me. The Madonna's face, the deep eyes, which appear to widen within, and the even more wonderful expression of the child, move me profoundly each time I see the picture. . . ." Through the *Dresden Gallery*, a volume of engravings, she knew the names and compositions of a great many other paintings, and she surprised her father, when they were in Dresden, by her recognition of the great art schools of which she had seen examples for the first time in Berlin. In Cassel, Rembrandt impressed her for life. On their arrival home her father declared that "her passion for art was so violent that she needed a whole regiment of soldiers to accompany her one after the other, and that she would wear them all out."

Visiting the same galleries many years later, she was herself surprised to find how deep had been her impressions from that first hasty trip, which only allowed for one, or at most two visits to each museum.

The preparation for the study of Art, which Ellen had received in childhood by association with art reproductions, had made her feel positive of the importance of modern endeavours in this direction, but she thinks that the children should be allowed freely to absorb art, that it should be a subject for teaching only in so far as the child is given answers to his own questions.

Italy made the deepest impression on her. For this country, she had yearned ever since she had read, at ten years of age, Nikander's<sup>1</sup> *Kung Enzo och Hesperiderna* (King Enzo and the Hesperides).

On account of a tendency to lung trouble, she spent the summer of 1876 in Norway, where she learned to love the people, as well as the scenery, during a month's stay in the vicinity of Aulestad and pedestrian tours through Jotunheimen, Sogn, and Hardanger.

In 1879, she made a fourth journey abroad, this time at the invitation of friends to accompany them to Holland, London, and Paris. On this trip she had the opportunity of visiting her childhood friend, Lisa in her happy home in Rouen, where her husband held a position.

<sup>1</sup> Swedish poet.—Translator's footnote.

Ellen Key never had to fight her way to intellectual activity, a struggle quite common for young women in those days, when parents in the circles to which she belonged, rather wished their daughters to be shielded from the new ideas of education, graduation, and other unwomanly attainments. We have seen that Fru Key had rather encouraged Ellen to exercise her talents, and she had often proposed this or that career for her. Her mother wanted her to take some examination, and concentrate her power in one direction. But the young daughter had remained immovable. "It was Sundsholm's scenery, my books, my little room, my thoughts and dreams I could not bear to leave," said Ellen once. Her feeling for this home was her strongest emotion in youth. Once, when she was eight years old, and away on a visit with her mother, the latter was awakened by her little daughter's sobbing. She had been unable to sleep for fear that Sundsholm might burn before she could reach home! Her love for her childhood home increased through fear of losing it, a fear which darkened her life from her sixteenth year. During the winters in Stockholm she used to follow the weather-reports from the home county with trembling heart.

If the crops threatened to fail, she was in despair, as that might be the blow which would deprive them of Sundsholm. She once said: "To live in the country, till the soil, never leave it—from the time I began to think this was the determining factor in my emotional life, and the modern movement back to the soil is one in which my heart has always been."

Among her extremely few poetic attempts is a poem<sup>1</sup> about a stream which was appropriated for commercial purposes, and would thus deprive coming generations of the beauty which had gladdened her. The real incident which inspired the poem was the draining of a lake, which caused her years of regret in her youth with nights of weeping and days of aching sorrow. Most people found such sorrow too absurd to deserve interest or sympathy, but those who have begun to care for the cultivation of beauty will perceive that Ellen Key was not understood, simply because she was ahead of her time, as she also was when she wrote down her thoughts on "Cultivation of the Art of Living" twenty years before she had heard others express such views.

<sup>1</sup> Published in *Tidskrift for Hemmet*, 1874.

## CHAPTER V

### WORK

THE words with which Ellen Key ends her autobiographical data may be quoted as introductory to the period of her life between thirty and forty years of age.

“ . . . In the meantime, the agricultural crisis drew near, which, in our county, affected my father first of all. His public life had consumed all his means as well as all his interest.

I realised now that the future for me would not hold the realisation of my personal dreams of a ‘Folk-highschool’ in our parish, but that my work would be wherever I best could earn my livelihood.”

Ellen Key has expressed herself so discreetly in regard to the radical change in the life of her family and herself, that it would be unseemly for a biographer to dwell upon the feelings of sorrow and regret.

In the beginning of the year 1880, the sepa-



ration from the home took place, and Ellen lived in the city, except for Christmas and summer vacations. The peace and quiet of country life had to be given up for the greater part of the year, and the noise and confusion of a great city, so unattractive to her, took its place. Formerly she had only spent a part of each winter in the city.

Ellen had not then heard of Ruskin and his revolt, later so well known, against cities and industry, but, in her romantic individualism she, like him, raged against Stockholm and city life in general, factories and railroads; and was not at all understood in this by her Stockholm friends. She never learned to feel at home in Stockholm, though she lived there thirty years. She never spoke of "going home" when she returned there. Her sorrow at leaving Sundsholm woke afresh every fall. She herself says that she would very likely never have done anything but remain there and work for the peasants, had not the feeling of duty as well as the necessity of earning her livelihood and helping her family forced her away.

Her vacations have always been spent in the country. Resorts and boarding-houses she has avoided as she would a plague. To

Sundsholm she still went after it had been turned over to a corporation, though managed by her brother, and even later when it came to have another owner, who, however, did not occupy it, she spent parts of every summer there until 1889. Since later owners have taken up their residence there, she has never wanted to return to the old home or see it again.

She had entered upon her thirty-first year when the new life began in which she had to make her own way in the world, without the protection and assistance of the home, with nothing but the opportunities she could create for herself. Many and great were the difficulties she had to overcome, yet she never borrowed a penny. She often went without sufficient food. New clothes were not to be thought of. But no one saw her discouraged, and she never felt herself humiliated. She was borne up, albeit unconsciously, during these decades of poverty, by the feeling that she was one of those whom exterior circumstances could not degrade.

Her principal field of labour was education. For several decades she devoted herself to school work, from the lowest stages, without feeling her powers misused. The work was to

her taste, and the children found in her their dearest and most enjoyable teacher. Her motherliness showed her the way to their hearts, and the pupils all loved her.

Anna Whitlock's now famous co-educational school, one of the foremost in Stockholm, had opened, a few years previous, as a small private school for girls. In the autumn of 1880, Ellen Key became a teacher there, and also lived with Anna Whitlock until 1884, when she rented a room of her own on Villa Street, and later a small flat on Valhalla Road, in order to be at least near the woods.

Her pupils, now mature women, speak with gratitude and enthusiasm of her lessons which often "reached heights of truly religious inspiration," as one expresses it. "She instilled in us pure thoughts and high ideals," is the testimony of another. A third has pleasingly related her reminiscence of one of the lessons, which, for a special reason, became a lesson in personal purity. "The hour was to have been devoted to a French poet, but on her way to school, Ellen Key had seen two of her pupils of the fifth class engaged in a lively flirtation with a couple of high-school boys, therefore she took the opportunity to speak on a subject that did not ordinarily belong to the school

programme. She spoke of the duty of the young to hold themselves sacred, to keep their minds pure and undefiled by the depravity which was often a consequence of the superficial and insipid jargon that the young people of opposite sex indulged in. With words aglow with tenderness and sincerity, she spoke of the duty of the woman-to-be to consider and to concentrate herself for the high calling that awaited her, . . . all that which our mothers with trembling hearts would have wished to have said to us, had they been able, and which our other teachers did not care to do, because their work was to cram our brains with as much book knowledge as possible in the shortest possible time, this, Ellen Key gave us with all the generosity of her warm heart and with the full brilliancy of her eloquence. To us, chits of girls of that horrid anæmic age of sweetmeats and undigested knowledge, she spoke in such a way that we bowed out heads in thought as well as shame. And we experienced at the same time a certain feeling of pride that we were being treated as human beings—or as if we were expected to become human beings."

A fourth writes about Ellen Key as follows: "She was so eager to form our minds in the right way, that when, as once happened while

she was reading to us from Geijer's prose works, we were not attentive, she was beside herself. She wanted us to be sober and sensible, to discard superficiality, to learn to concentrate our thoughts on one subject at a time. . . . "

It would probably have been wiser to adopt the school tone with its stricter discipline, but Ellen Key could understand as little then as now the necessity for school grinding, warmly interested as she herself always was, and consequently some thoughtless and childish pupils wantonly rejected the precious pearls offered. Moreover, she liked to see the healthy playfulness of the young assert itself, for she was, and is, a child among children. And it is doubtful that the pearls could have become their own valued treasures had they been forced upon them instead of being received by grateful hearts. During recess, she was generally surrounded by the younger pupils who crowded upon her screaming: "Tante Ellen, Tante Ellen!" until she was quite helpless and had to defend herself with both hands. The "Tante" title was thrust upon her by the school custom. Outside of the school she has always been simply Ellen Key to all children.

Gradually she expanded the narrow sphere of the school, and began to give courses in history and literature for young women, at first for a small group belonging to Jewish families, among whose daughters she won friends for life. Towards the close of the year 1890, the pupils had increased to one hundred in number, and came from all classes of society, some from the highest aristocracy, married as well as unmarried, many teachers, and others. Her lectures dealt with such subjects as *The French Moralists*, *The Salons*, *Literary Conditions in Russia*, *The Italian Renaissance*, *America's Revolutionary War*, etc.

A former member of these private courses writes: "Through these lectures, which she kept up for a number of years, Ellen Key has made one of her great contributions to our cultural life. . . . Of the many thousand times she has picked up a book to read, I doubt if she once did so unpurposely, for, with this thinker more than with others, study goes hand in hand with development of a personality. To one who has tried at all times to follow this development, every new production of hers, whether spoken or printed article, appears as a firm, logically connected link in her constantly broadening soul life. In small



ELLEN KEY IN 1885.

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY A. APELGREN, STOCKHOLM.





as in large things she scorns to occupy herself with anything that has no bearing on her innermost nature. There is a subjectivity which ties down thought, and shuts out vision. It is that which shows itself in small souls in their inability and unwillingness to look beyond themselves. There is another subjectivity which liberates the mind and gives a seer's vision, the gift of certain great personalities. . . . This kind of subjectivity is peculiar to the speakers and writers who have the greatest power over people, a power which is produced not alone by the eloquence of language, full freedom of thought or lyrical trend of emotion, or even when these are harmoniously united, as is the case in Ellen Key. It is this subjectivity burning through all her words which moves one."

Still another writes: "Ellen Key presents the facts of history in a manner which transforms the often dreaded, dry study of names and dates to a living and fruitful reality, which takes hold of our very being."

Not until in the spring of 1899, when her literary work had come to be of great importance to her, did she give up her school work.

Since the autumn of 1883, Ellen Key has

realised, to some extent, the dream of her youth, the helping in the enlightenment of the labouring classes. In 1880, a People's Institute had been founded in Stockholm by Doctor Anton Nyström, who had taken the initiative, and collected the means himself. Lectures on scientific and historic subjects are held here daily. When this Institute had been in existence for a couple of years, Ellen Key overcame her timidity to the extent that she sought an appointment there as lecturer in the history of Swedish civilisation. Her application was approved, and with great trepidation she undertook her mission. It was one of Ellen Key's characteristics to avoid speaking of herself, and accordingly few people knew of her old longing for this field of work. But, in a letter, her mother expressed great joy over the fact that her daughter had at last gained an opportunity to contribute to the enlightenment of the masses, a duty which mother as well as daughter considered sacred. Most unpretentiously, Ellen Key asked us to criticise her lectures during the first winter. Her first lecture was given at the affiliated branch of the Institute, on a narrow little street in Kungsholmen, and was attended by fifteen listeners. But very soon she had to be trans-

ferred to the large hall of the Institute, which seats four hundred and eighty people, and during later years even this proved too small for the many who sought admission.

The only criticism to be made of her twenty years of fruitful service is that her language has not always been simple enough for the audiences of the People's Institute. It is difficult for her to bring herself down to the level of the common labourer, but as one listener rightly remarked: "The doors of the People's Institute are open to all whose education has been uncompleted, whether through poverty, or the cares of earning a livelihood and insufficient time for studies, and these have made up the great audiences which filled the hall during her lectures." During later years her lectures dealt with the history of literature instead of civilisation.

There are those who have followed her from the very beginning. One interested attendant pleasantly expressed the thoughts of many in the following words: "The speaker's description of the life of past ages is always coloured by richness of feeling, not by pathetic declamations, coquettish epigrams, or decorative phraseology. Neither does she throw weights stamped with prejudice onto the balance

scales. Her delivery is ever marked by plastic moderation. Earnest research, earnestly rendered, fills full the measure within the limits of the lectures. One soon finds that it is her deep, human interest which has brought her to study history. This interest is correlated with her finely expressed indignation against all kinds of injustice and oppression."

What Ellen Key has meant to her audiences was best made evident when she resigned her chair in the People's Institute. She made her farewell in a touching last address which ended with the following words: "Not great learning and many-sided knowledge have I been able to give you. I aimed at something else. My endeavour has been, through literature, to teach you of life, to help you to live more richly, and to listen better to the voices of life in song and story." The audience was strangely moved by what she said, and also by the strong emotion which drove the blood from her face as she stood, framed by flowers, with downward gaze and subdued voice, solemnly and tenderly bidding her loved people farewell.

A labourer now came forward and with a few appropriate words unveiled a portrait of Ellen Key, done in pastel by the artist Hanna Pauli,

and presented to the Institute by members of the audience. The founder of the Institute, Dr. Nyström, then expressed the deep-felt gratitude of the Board and the Public to Fröken Ellen Key, who for a period of twenty years had been an honour to the People's Institute.

That her comprehensive and graphic portrayal of the phases of civilisation under discussion never even suggested a divergence from a high conception of the significance of morality, has been certified by those who attended her private as well as her public lectures, in spite of the insinuations to the contrary that have been noised abroad. She has always warned against submission to authoritative dogma. She has ever emphasised individual responsibility regarding the thoughts and events of past ages just as much as towards the fluctuating ideas and occurrences of our own day.

The gatherings called "Tolfterna"<sup>1</sup> may

<sup>1</sup> In this, her one and only "organisation," Ellen Key has been consistently true to her hatred of all formality. The meetings of "Tolfterna" have taken place regularly for more than twenty years, without any red tape, club, board, or statutes, but under absolute self-government, to the satisfaction of all concerned.

Ellen Key had before taken part in a similar movement, the Dressmakers' Society, where she used to entertain the members once a week with talks, recitations, etc., and here, as well as

also be classed as educational work. It is a voluntary gathering without statutes, an agreement between women of the well-to-do class to invite workingwomen to their homes, and through pleasant and helpful association with them to diminish the distance between the classes. Ellen Key had once heard a young working-girl, say: "It is not your better food and finer clothes we mostly envy, but it is the many intellectual enjoyments which are so much more within your reach than ours." This gave her the idea. On the 1st of March, 1892, she commenced to arrange these socials with the assistance of some friends. A number of ladies, twelve in each group, took turns in inviting to their homes young women employed in some manual labour, to become acquainted with them and thus bridge the gap between the different grades of society. The journalist René writes about these social gatherings: "Ellen Key also loves to spread joy. Each and every one who knows anything at all about her life knows that though her days are crowded with serious work, study, and research she yet gives many hours to

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through her lectures at the People's Institute, she came in touch with workingwomen. But "Tolfterna" were founded on the idea of *mutual* exchange, and that constituted their novelty.

brighten the existence of those who live in darkness. . . . Never have I been so drawn to Ellen Key as I was when I saw her in the midst of that group of pure willed young women, few of whom would have been awakened to higher interests without her." The pleasant friendly tone which exists at the "Tolfterna" gatherings, without condescension on one hand or humility on the other, is a very splendid thing and holds much of significance.

We have a good description of Ellen Key, dating from this period, by Hellen Lindgren, lately deceased, an essayist of unusual sensitiveness: "In Ellen Key there are two people, one personal, the other quite impersonal; one extremely sensitive, the other dryly sensible, almost matter of fact; one hot and passionate, the other absolutely self-controlled. This characteristic contradiction may also be observed in her gently modulated voice, and her very energetic mode of expression. The smooth, nunlike hair, and the generally dark, plain dress give the impression of one who wishes to efface herself, while, on the other hand, there is something almost despotic in her unwillingness to yield in a discussion. . . . From her earliest youth she has been interested in nature just as much as in books. With her



inquisitive mind and eagerness to acquire knowledge, she soon became acquainted with the different currents of thoughts and ideas of her day, and in the solitude of country life the young girl steadily pursued, quite by herself, an intellectual education which made her mentally mature and spiritually whole and harmonious, while at the same time she never thought of culture as something finished either for herself or for others. . . . This quietly self-acquired development made her unfavourably disposed toward the cramming system of modern school education, where the mental food is accepted from the teacher instead of the pupil being obliged to overcome his own difficulties and to crack the nuts of knowledge with his own teeth. Her sympathy with naturalness, and her antipathy for all ceremoniousness were acquired by her life in the country. Inhaling woodland air and philosophy in the same breath, growing intimate with horses and cows, and at the same time becoming familiar with Shakespeare, Spencer, and Mill, she developed deep insight into the life of man and nature and civilisation at large."

In the summer of 1890, Ellen Key made a trip to Paris and Rouen, again to visit her child-



hood friend, and to Bavaria, where she stayed with her friends, Herr and Frau von Vollmar. She tramped through Oberbayern and attended the Passion-play in Oberammergau. In *Verk och Människor*<sup>1</sup> she has given so vivid a description of the Bavarian highlands that one is carried along, seeming to see it all in reality. Her portrayal of the people and of the scenery reveals a master's touch, and with the wide-awake vision and historical sensitiveness of one interested in every phase of human progress she observes the connection between the remarkable plays and the national disposition. All that her eye has seen and her fine ear heard, she has wished to share with us. Each time Ellen Key has had the good fortune to travel abroad in the greater countries of culture, she has, on her arrival home, in one way or another divided with us the treasures she has gathered. Through living descriptions of places and personalities she has furthered instruction and given pleasure, hence we have joyfully anticipated each new work of her pen. Her portrayals of the Passion-play at Oberammergau belong to the very best of the many she has given us. She begins with a genial interpretation of the meaning

<sup>1</sup> "Men and Works."

of the cross as a symbol of nobly borne sorrow, and then sums up the impressions of the Play thus: "The Past as well as the Present conveys to us the assurance that the highest in every age is submerged uncomprehended by the majority. The life-renewing truth is always trampled under foot by the established order . . . It is not by the cross that men have learned to live; but by the cross they have learned to suffer—and as long as LIVING means SUFFERING for the majority, crosses are likely to remain on heights and in valleys."

Various motives have led our steps to Oberammergau; love of travel, curiosity, and the desire, on the part of literary tourists, for something new wherewith to fill some columns in the papers. On the one hand cold feelings and pretty words, on the other hand the need of the devout childish soul for strength and solace in the struggle and want of earthly life. Between these two extremes we have Ellen Key's view of the scenes presented. From the *Campanile* of liberal thought she sounds her bells. They summon us to worship before the crucifixion of the innocent, to abhorrence before the victory of unrighteousness. In religious ecstasy she kneels before the mystery of sacrifice.

## CHAPTER VI

### PUBLIC ACTIVITY

BESIDES the very confining and regular work at the school, and her private and public lecture courses, Ellen Key has been greatly in demand as a speaker before various Women's Societies, Student Fraternities, Temperance Leagues and Labour, Unions in Stockholm, Gothembourg, Christiania, Copenhagen, Helsingfors, as well as smaller towns in Sweden. Even as early as 1880, in Stockholm, we find her giving addresses on different subjects. Without pecuniary reward, she generously lavished her energy to further enlightenment, to collect means for treasuries, for agitation, for this or that purpose. She has especially laboured for workingmen, women, and children. When engaged to speak in other cities she has always given one or more free lectures. This is much more remarkable since she is a popular speaker and fills to the last seat every hall in which she speaks. Her "self-realisation" has been to give to others what they other-

wise would have lacked, to awaken slumbering talents, to make life richer for those who labour and sacrifice, to give them holiday-moments. She has seldom spoken on political questions, or discussed married women's legal position. Generally her subject has been some great personality, art, or literature or other cultural themes.

We have spoken before of Ellen Key's shy and reserved nature and her lack of self-confidence. Her family was greatly surprised at Ellen's psychological turn when, in spite of this shyness, she finally learned to speak in public. Now, her name has long resounded throughout our country and neighbouring lands, as well as farther abroad, by reason of her power as a public speaker. Once, many years ago, when she had forgotten her manuscript, and was forced to speak without it, she found she could do better thus, and since then she generally jots down only the principal points, finding the right words easily at the time of speaking. Under the circumstance it is but natural that a too hasty expression may find utterance, but this happens, however, very seldom. Her extempore speaking instead of reading makes her lectures very vivid and magnetic.

It has been rumoured that she has studied expression and oratory, but such has not been the case. She is, as Oscar Levertin once wrote, "a born orator." When she enters a lecture room there is something of the priestess about her, and by the time she has reached her place on the platform, such absolute silence reigns that one would think oneself alone, did not the sight of the crowded hall convince one that the silence is but an expression of the great respect with which the lecturer is greeted. Her first words are uttered so low that one hears them with a slight effort, but the silence in the room sharpens the hearing, and without raising her voice, her words reach the farthest corners. By the rich content and brilliant delivery of her lectures she keeps her audience spell-bound, even when the discourse lasts for a couple of hours. Again to quote Oscar Levertin: "What we love in Ellen Key is her pure, noble will, and her shining courage, the fresh and impulsive frankness of her personality, the all-embracing tenderness of her nature which lends her words the fruitful, joyous fulness of the summer."

This is especially true in regard to her effect on an audience. The same writer counts her one of those "whom nature has created after

its own image, with a fertile chaos of thoughts, moods, and inspirations. They awaken and warm us, they fascinate by the multiplicity of view-points, by the fire and glow of temperament and the enthusiastic manner of expression. Nothing is easier than to point out inconsistencies, exaggerations, and contradictions in such natures, but, at the same time, nothing is more vain than to imagine with such criticism to have sounded the depths of their spirit. . . . Cold-blooded criticism cannot efface the living impression of the burning sincerity of their intentions or the music of their words."

As her lectures have generally been published in book form, their contents will be treated in the chapter that deals with her authorship. They have usually been considered at length in the press. Enthusiastic praise and bitter abuse have crossed swords about her ever since 1889, and thus it is likely to be, as long as she appears before the public.

In some people's imagination Ellen Key is pictured as worldly and ambitious, eager for activity, desirous of a following. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The development of her feeling of duty, the broadening out of sympathy for her fellow-men, for their needs and sufferings, are the results of

her having learned to overcome her inborn disposition whose deepest inclination was to sink back into her own world of nature, books, feelings, and dreams,—an inclination which she has called her “temptation.”

One of her intimate friends once said: “Ellen Key could never have broken away from romanticism by intellectual or æsthetic processes. Only the ethical power in her nature could liberate her.” This remark is deeply true.

In the fall of 1884, when Ellen returned to Stockholm to take up her work at the school and Institute, her mother had recently passed away, and she was very sad. At her mother's death-bed, she had tested her own position in regard to a belief in immortality. In speaking to a friend she said: “I felt there, that it would not be so hard to *die* without hope of immortality,—to *live* without it is harder.”

There now followed some years of deep personal experiences, new joys, and bitter sorrows. For years, her life seemed so valueless to her that she was tempted to do away with herself, but this personal crisis had decisive consequences in that it strengthened

her resolve to live in service for others, and thus forget her own fate. Indignation over what she felt to be unrighteousness braced her, turned her away from herself, and brought her into the battle in public life. Up to that time, Ellen Key had commanded unqualified admiration and popularity among young and old on all sides. Moderate and considerate, she had provoked no one. Her activities had so far been confined to the calmer educational work. But from the winter of 1889 Ellen Key entered upon a new era in her life.

Development and liberation of the personality is the goal toward which she aims all her efforts. Her lectures and writings in general have always virtually had this object in view. She calls attention to the interaction that takes place between man's ascent to an ever higher development, and his liberation from prejudices based on law-paragraphs. The greater the demands man puts on himself, the less need has society for dealing with him by prohibitions and punishments, and the fewer these become, the sooner will arise the ethnical and intellectual harbinger of civilisation, the individual. With burning zeal Ellen Key preaches her gospel, counselling each and every one to consider the right and



significance of the personality in all human relations.

She proclaims the rights of the child, of parents, of man and woman, of superiors and inferiors. Aye, no one is forgotten. She speaks to all, and for all, yet most warmly for the oppressed to whatever class he may belong. She knows that the personality may be oppressed in the home as in the state, in the narrower sphere of the family as well as in the broader sphere of society.

The theory of evolution had found its way to the north, and, in the eighties, there were a number of able young apostles in our country who zealously preached its doctrines. In optimistic carelessness they threw away much that was of value. It is true that much of the old was tainted, and had poisoned the air. Wishing to purify the atmosphere, they were not chary when it came to discarding or keeping what, in their opinion, was obsolete. Older conceptions of morality, as, for instance the dogmas of the State church, were assailed, and the battle waxed hot. When the young voices would not be silenced, and the reactionary representatives found the time ripe for chastising the "daredevils" who, for the

last decade, from platform and press, had rashly attacked "the good old order," had dared to disturb the "established status" and proposed radical social transformations, an old legal statute, with imprisonment for blasphemy against God, was invoked. For months the prison gates were closed upon a number of Swedish citizens who had been found guilty of this offence. The persecution of advocates of the new ideas became general on the part of those who were in authority. Scholarships were withdrawn from young students at academies on account of their "heretical" views. And many other things happened, both within family circles and in the community, which made it evident that the reactionaries ruled.

A long time had passed since the statute dealing with "blasphemy against God" had been applied. In the year 1850, so little progress had been made in the revision of laws that a prosecutor demanded that F. Th. Borg, the "criminal," the great champion of liberty and truth, be sentenced according to Act I, Sec. 1, Criminal Code, with capital punishment for blasphemy against God. He was finally acquitted. That Borg later was twice elected a member of the First Chamber, though

his views never changed, is a fact which might have taught us something had we been inclined to learn.

In 1884, August Strindberg had been indicted for offending against the same law. But when the jury acquitted him it was thought that the antiquated statute could not be applied in our day. But in the year 1889, it was not enough that those indicted were found guilty by the jury but, what was worse, many, of whom one had the right to expect more enlightened views, approved the verdict. Here and there a voice uttered feeble protests, through the medium of the daily press, expressing amazement and indignation, but on the whole the silence which reigned was as great outside as inside the prison walls.

“At this time of political dearth and indifference,” to quote Elna Tenow in her sketch of Ellen Key, “where friend no longer knew friend, and science extended a brotherly hand to superstition—when the banners of freedom of thought and speech drooped, a calm and controlled voice pierced the oppressive silence.”

It was Emil Key's daughter who with dignified courage and humane justice appeared before the Swedish people. Equipped with

political and historical knowledge, she warned against the base tyranny that manifested itself in the brutal arrest of four young men because they, in the excitement of battle, had not considered the form, while similar views had been expressed with impunity by others who had better understood how to clothe them in scientific and philosophic language.

Called to speak before the Liberal Woman's League in Gothenburg, she gave an address on "How Reactions Arise," which was repeated subsequently in Stockholm. And at the invitation of the Student Society "Verdandi," she introduced a discussion at a public meeting in Upsala the same year on the "Freedom of the Press and Free Speech." The discourse was soon afterwards issued as a brochure.

She reiterated in modern language Talis Qualis' woe over those "who purposely wound the lung in the broad breast of the public," the lung being for her, as for him, free speech.

She turned to the legal statutes and showed them to be in conflict with the law of progress. She cried aloud that it is in direct opposition to the civilisation of our day that spiritual

<sup>1</sup> The nom de plume of C. W. A. Strandberg, a Swedish writer and poet.—Translator's footnote.

battles be fought with other than spiritual weapons. She did not defend the manner in which the condemned had proclaimed their views; she severely censured all classes of society. And, though her sympathy, on this as on all occasions, was with youth, she bade them realise that the advance party, which they represented, must learn to choose weapons and rightly use them or shoulder the serious responsibility for causing reactions to arise. "Our own faults and mistakes are in the long run the only dangerous enemies to our cause."

Sharp attacks were made on Ellen Key through the press. Many who had hitherto been on her side now turned from her. But nothing disturbed her assurance of having acted right. Now first did we become acquainted with her strong personality, her passion for justice which since childhood had inspired her with an obdurate courage to defend, and from this time on made itself more and more felt.

Ellen Key's words resounded through the whole land. Her brave stand for the cause of justice gave her a prominent place among persons holding similar views, but lacking her courage, and perhaps also her knowledge and genius.

By hard work for her own economic independence and to help her family, she resisted her natural disposition for contemplation and solitude. Having so far conquered that she was able to express her thoughts, she was moved by pity for the suffering of others to become their interpreter. Her decidedly ethical personality threw off the fetters that were a hindrance on the road which seemed to her the only right one. Her action in defending those who were on trial for blasphemy caused her to be proposed as candidate for the *Folk-Riksdag*. But, thinking herself unsuited for practical politics, she refused to accept the candidacy. With a well-nigh imperturbable consistency she has resolutely held herself aloof from public discussions and congresses, heedless of the numberless opportunities thus offered her for expressing her opinions. Only when forced by a deep inner conviction has she come forward, alone, and independent of parties.

We have mentioned that Ellen Key, urged by Fru Adlersparre, first began to write original articles, under the signature E-N, in *Tidskrift for Hemmet*, where they at once attracted attention. Her first article dealt

with Camilla Collett, and was published in 1874. Then followed literary and critical reviews and biographical studies of English women writers, all treated from the point of view of the highest idealism, especially as touching upon love and marriage.

Shortly after the publication of her first book, *How Reactions Arise*, in 1889, another book appeared. The unfortunate Ernst Ahlgren<sup>1</sup> had recently ended her life, and, bound to her by the ties of friendship and sympathy, Ellen Key wrote her monograph, the sad story of one who "meets death on every path," the desire for life having been quenched by thoughts of death, unsatisfied life-needs annihilating the struggling, yearning, highly gifted woman and author.

Shortly afterward Ellen Key suffered other grievous losses. Two friends intimately associated with her since 1880, when her circle gradually had become that of the literary and artistic *Vänstern*,<sup>2</sup> were stricken by death in their best years,—Sonja Kowalewsky, who died in 1891, and Anne Charlotte Leffler, Duchessa di Cajanello in 1892. On New Year's Eve

<sup>1</sup> Nom de plume of Victoria Benedictsson, a Swedish writer.  
—Translator's footnote.

<sup>2</sup> Left, the Liberals, as against the Right, the Conservatives.  
—Translator's footnote.



of the same year, she had been present at her father's death in her married sister's home in Visby, where he had been cared for ever since his illness enforced his leave of absence from Helsingborg. Crossing the sea, one night, in a snow-storm, she brought her father's remains to the grave of her mother in Vestervik's cemetery, the only plot of earth in the beloved home parish to which she henceforth had proprietary rights.

With such deep personal experiences of the presence of death, causes for sober reflection have not been lacking in Ellen Key's life. The actual passing away of her father was perhaps not so bitter a blow, since the paralytic stroke some years previously had left him mentally incapacitated. But the loss of her two friends shook her profoundly. Through them, Stockholm had been touched as it were by a fresh breeze from the great world, and this had been especially exhilarating to Ellen Key. At this early date, she had as yet had little opportunity for studying places and conditions abroad such as later offered during her prolonged visits to foreign lands when, as a famous author and admired personality, she was the honoured guest in private homes, such as rarely open their doors to foreigners.



The death of Sonja Kowalewsky, who, in later years, after Anne Charlotte Leffler had left Stockholm, had attached herself to Ellen Key with tenderer intimacy, was felt severely by the latter. Together with a friend she had nursed Sonja Kowalewsky during her last illness, and immediately upon her demise she wrote her obituary which, though short, was rich in content and caused us in the north to realise what she had been.

Of Sonja Kowalewsky's life-work we were, of course, not ignorant. What science and literature lost through her death was well known, and the daily press, national and foreign, informed us thereof. But those who considered womanly qualities of prime importance now learned also that the world had lost a true woman, one who "though she was the most celebrated woman-scientist of the century, and perhaps of all time, counted neither science, literature, nor fame as the central thing in life. For her, the heart was the fountain of life."

This character sketch was later completed by a fuller mention and genial comprehension of Sonja Kowalewsky's remarkable and complex personality and strange life in the biography of Anne Charlotte Leffler which Ellen

Key wrote upon her death, and where, in loving memory of these two friends, she gives a keen interpretation of their different temperaments, and throws new light upon their characters.<sup>1</sup> In the fates of these women, Ellen Key saw fresh proof of her oft-expressed contention that for the womanly woman the heart-life is the central thing.

The book, *Anne Charlotte Leffler, Duchessa di Cajanello, Some Biographical Notes*, contains, in spite of its modest title, a masterly characterisation of her personality, and the reader is also introduced to Sweden's literary world of 1880. The book was translated into Danish, German, and Russian, and judged by the foremost critics as an exemplary biography. In this work we get a good insight into the author's own personality, and we may well agree with a reviewer that "with her ingrained unselfishness which never denies itself, she simply and unaffectedly avoids introducing herself to the reader though she makes the third, and not the least prominent, in this trio of friendship and genius." George Brandes gives

<sup>1</sup> The sketch of Sonja Kowalewsky as well as the biographies of Victoria Benedictsson (Ernst Ahlgren) and Anne Charlotte Leffler have been published in one volume in Germany under the title of *Drei Frauenschicksale*.

Ellen Key a unique place as woman psychologist and critic.<sup>1</sup> Quoting her pertinent phrase that Anne Charlotte was the bread and Sonja the wine at their spiritual banquets, he remarks that "in Ellen Key's nature neither bread nor wine is lacking."

A longer dissertation by Eva Fryxell in *Svensk Tidskrift* (Swedish periodical), in 1893, in which the deceased writers were attacked from the standpoint of Christian idealism, gave rise to a rather remarkable controversy. In her biography of Anne Charlotte Leffler, Ellen Key had stated that the three authors, Ernst Ahlgren, Sonja Kowalewsky, and Anne Charlotte Leffler, and other contemporaries gradually withdrew their sympathies from the aims of the woman emancipation movement. The one-sidedness which Ellen Key had al-

<sup>1</sup> Not all critics thought thus. In *Dagny*, the woman suffrage organ, there appeared a crushing review where nothing was found creditable. The total impression was summed up as follows: "Miss Key's book boasts the stamp of frankness, but we are struck by its lack of veracity and loyalty." The book was simultaneously reviewed in the Danish periodical, *Kvinden og Samfundet* (Woman and Community), where an especially laudatory article by Magdalena Thoreson ended with the following words: "Wherever the woman movement makes its righteous progress in the north, honour and gratitude should be shown Ellen Key for her noble work." Thus differently was the same book judged by woman suffrage journals on each side of the Sound.

ways deplored in the equal-rights women she here assailed anew in her own name, as well as in behalf of her deceased friends. What was more natural than that some one from the opposite camp should turn to combat the opinions she expressed which also dealt with such dangerous subjects as love, marriage, and religion? Under the heading "Women-Author Types of the Naturalistic Trend in the Eighties," Eva Fryxell had attacked the three representatives of the thoughts and views of large groups of highly intelligent people, especially for their conception of true womanliness, family life, and woman's position in the home. And in several issues of the same periodical Ellen Key and her friends were charged with harbouring immoral tendencies.

Ellen Key was not slow to reply. From their opposite camps the conflicting theories of life, Christianity on the one hand, evolution on the other, strove against each other. Ellen Key's final remarks in this controversy may be found in somewhat revised form in *Tankebilder I (Images of Thought)* (see "Self-Assertion" and "Self-Renunciation"). Already in her early youth Ellen Key had found the Christian ideal irreconcilable with life. Little by little she fought her way to

the philosophy of life which has since been her own. With clear logic and dignified language she states her position in regard to the Christian doctrine, and the reasons which led her to a point of view in which every department of human life may be arranged under the laws of evolution. The seriousness of the struggle during the "decade of hard-won development," of which she speaks in her preface to *Tankebilder*, is here made clear to us.

Ellen Key may be said to be an interpreter of the thoughts and experiences of a great many, especially of those who have wanted to take Christianity seriously, who, like her, have fought the battle of faith, and made fearful by a tender conscience, have sought in vain to hold intelligence in obedience to faith. And these can appreciate the worth of the clear, simple, and, at the same time, sublime argument by which Ellen Key demonstrates the impossibility of a complete following of Jesus for society at large as well as for the individual, unless "compromise blunt the sword-point which Jesus thrust, sharp and naked, at every conscience." Those who remain sincere believers, comfort themselves in this bitter struggle with the thought that this impossibility belongs to the imperfection of earthly life.

Those who call themselves Christians construe the Bible as best they can to prove their superficial Christianity to be real.

Ellen Key observes how Christianity's line of defence varies from age to age. "Less is now said of the God-Man, the atonement for the sin of the world. Instead we hear much of the personification of the ideal of Love. On our relation to him depends, not our eternal bliss—eternal woe is one of those 'imperishable truths' now antiquated—but our part in the religious and ethical force which alone is able to transform the heart and deliver it from sin and especially selfishness." With relentless logic, she proceeds to set forth the manifold contradictions between the life we live and the dictates of Christianity, which daily cause twinges of conscience, unless it becomes a matter of dull habit to take these contradictions for granted. She gives a historic *résumé* of the development of religion and puts Protestantism in its proper historic place. "Christianity as a religion reached its old age in the Reformation. . . . Protestantism ushered in the vacillating system of bargaining with the Christian ideals, which shows its influence on all departments of life, family, state, art, literature, science which one has

wanted half freed from Christianity and half sanctified by it. . . . The sovereign right of the individual conscience to decide in matters of faith and morality has continued. It has done its part in shaping our whole democratic century, politically as well as religiously. Its inner tendency a thinker has pertinently expressed as pantheistic, as a striving to break down the boundaries first between man and nature, and finally between man and God. And this belief in the oneness of man and nature, the obedience to law in all that happens is Monism."

After bravely and solemnly explaining why she could no longer bear the name of Christian and that the Christian faith with her had given place to Monism, we understand that, when we read her words, we must proceed on the assumption that it is from the point of view of this philosophy that Ellen Key judges events, builds up propositions, proves assertions, and founds hopes. It was from Spinoza and Goethe that she had her Monism. At that time, she had not read a page of Haeckel by whom Monism was discussed ten years later. In *Lifelines*, ii., she has further expounded her faith.

Ellen Key's individualistic morale of happi-



ness has given rise to both amazement and indignation. Egotism, they say, would thereby gain an unworthy dominion of altruism. But how does Ellen Key define individualism? Let us turn for example to her own words in the *Freedom of the Personality*. "No individualist persuades himself that he lives for anybody's sake but his own, or for any other object than to develop and ennoble all the resources of his being. But the more fully he attains his self-realisation, the more strongly does he feel the complexity within; he is as sensitive to the weal and woe of others as he is to his own."

Similarly, she speaks of the morale of happiness as against the morale of duty. When the young ask: "What shall we do to become useful?" she cries to them: "Be seekers of happiness! . . . With the very highest demands upon happiness!" Then she tells them what she means by the seeking of happiness: "Development of all the powers of soul and body, avoiding such amusements and indulgences, competitions, and pastimes as tend spiritually or physically to degrade, vulgarise, or corrupt."

Here, it is plainly evident that only the grossest misunderstanding or purposely falsi-



fied citations can transform the gospel of happiness, preached by the full-blooded altruist, Ellen Key, into a doctrine of self-indulgence, and only by leaving out the second half of the truth which she emphasises. Well may one deplore the vague fancies concerning these words which so often have caused the fruitful conflict of principles to degenerate into a sterile battle of words.

New moral doctrines arise, time and again, and have always done so. The most recent, now being developed, is the individualistic, and is a much needed complement to the altruistic moral teaching, which bases its message on the theory of science in which all phases of human existence are treated as an evolution of the positive and last stage in the life of humanity. Rightly to be an altruist one must without doubt also be an individualist.

In the summer of 1894, she again visited her friends, the Von Vollmars in Bavaria, walking on foot through Tyrol. Ellen Key is not fond of the "puffing locomotives" by means of which one rushes through places; she prefers the stage-coach, "that uncomfortable and fascinating means of observing a country's peculiar features," but she likes better still to wander on foot when that is

possible. She visited museums and exhibitions in Munich, Dresden, Nürnberg, and Weimar, and returned home by way of Berlin. After this journey, she gave in the *Nordisk Revy* (*Northern Review*), "Snapshots of European Art," a hasty but clear and constructive review of the development of modern art. A second reminiscence deals with her visit to Goethe's Gartenhaus and the Goethehaus in Weimar, which she describes in her book, *Men and Works*. A third result of this trip, was the little brochure *Individualism and Socialism*, which Ellen Key wrote, after having exchanged thoughts with George von Vollmar, during her last visit to his home in Bavaria, and after he had finally convinced her that individualism and socialism may be combined, something she had long doubted, and, therefore, stood hesitating before the socialism to which she was otherwise drawn. In 1898, she again visited these friends when on a tour to the great cities of Germany and Italy.

The above mentioned articles, Ellen Key considered as but temporary expressions of her experiences, and not until years later did she become an author in earnest.

The strong feeling of blood relationship has

never left Ellen Key. "Our different experiences and opinions cannot break these ties," she once wrote. When she no longer had Sundsholm to go to, she often spent her vacations with her sister Ada, between whom and herself the tenderest affection exists, in spite of their dissimilar views of life. During these visits to Visby, she learned to know and love Gotland, making excursions on foot through various parts of the island. Since her sister's family moved to Karlstad Ellen has often spent her Christmas holidays there.

Of Ellen's brothers and sisters, three are living: one brother, the agriculturist Mac Key who has two children—a son Ivar and a daughter Ellen; the sister Ada, nearest to her own age, and married to Director Petterson, has no children; but her youngest sister, and first pupil, Hedda, married to Architect Yngve Rasmussen in Gothenburg, has five children. In these seven nieces and nephews Ellen Key finds compensation for being without children of her own. Since her removal from Stockholm in the spring of 1893, Ellen has spent the time between her travels abroad partly with her friends, the Gibson family, at Jonsered, and partly with her brother then living at Oby farm in old Varend County. During

the summer of 1895, Ellen Key's brother and his wife entrusted their children to her care during their absence. Now she actually experienced how impossible it is to combine the duties of home with other work, an opinion she had earlier expressed but now found practically proven. Her thoughts on this question, strengthened by the summer's experiences, she expressed in a lecture entitled "Missbrukad Kvinnokraft," ("Woman's Energies Misdirected"). The lecture was received with great acclaim in Copenhagen, but aroused much resentment in Stockholm and Gothenburg, when given there later. She was severely criticised by the suffragists, who went so far as to make offensive insinuations as to her character. Among other imputations flung in her face, she was told that by prating of sex, love, and marriage she had shown herself to be an immoral and dangerous person. This judgment is repeated even to this day. In regard to the tone which certain of the critics allowed themselves, we may well agree with the Finnish reviewer who could not help thinking that it would have caused amazement in other countries. Abroad, one has long been accustomed to have women deal with these subjects, but in Sweden one was shocked that

an "unmarried woman" handled the delicate questions which in "sanctified silence" ought to be hidden from profane glances. If we could have put Doctor, instead of Miss, before her name, probably the impression would have been another.

For those who have thought at all about their life, especially as sex-beings, numberless questions must have arisen for married and unmarried alike. We ought to be glad that there are women, even without a scholastic degree, who have courage to communicate what life has taught them, and certainly not all physicians, sociologists, and philosophers have penetrated the depths of these problems as have some lay women. As regards Ellen Key, she has touched on these intimate and delicate subjects as only a master in the art of language could do.

A very prominent man, speaking of her, said: "What most surprises me is that those who reproach Ellen Key for immoral tendencies are the very ones who, through their own interpretation, impute vileness and indecency to her utterances, which otherwise plainly show a complete inexperience of the sensual and vulgar phases of life. Those who *will* not understand her ought not to read her."

When Ellen Key chose as a motto for her "Missbrukad Kvinnokraft," "Woman's History is Love," it must have been her belief that at the least the women would not attempt to dispute her, and that the little book would be all that was necessary on this subject, on which she would have preferred to keep silent and where she imagined she would be readily understood. Instead, there ensued a battle which found its vent in a mass of articles, and fifteen pamphlets, in which women assailed Ellen Key for her false doctrines. All these writings proved that Ellen Key had hit vulnerable points in the equal-rights women's system. The little book was sharply criticised from suffrage quarters also in neighbouring countries; though hailed with sympathy and admiration from all other sides: They spoke of "desertion" and in their excitement overlooked what she had spoken and written before in the same line.

The fanatical sectarianism, which unfortunately adheres to many woman's rights champions, brings in its train, as always where such spirit reigns, a prejudiced presentation of an opponent's opinion. "Ellen Key has become unfaithful to the ideas of her youth," they said. One of their best advocates

had given herself over to the enemy.<sup>1</sup> Yet all who have followed Ellen Key's writings and public utterances ought to know that she has always put woman's heart-life first, while, at the same time, she has urged complete freedom for her; that always, even in her so-called *reaction*, she has spoken only of self-limitation; and that she has never been opposed to woman suffrage, but only to the suffragists' method of twisting it to fresh oppression of individual women and of woman's own nature. Ellen once said: "All that I wanted, I still want." And we have proof of this. In 1875, *Nya Dagligt Allenhanda* printed an article by Ellen Key under the caption: Robinson's *Maria Cult of Protestantism*, where line for line she sketches that conception of woman's destiny, which had been hers from youth, and which has deepened and strengthened with years.

Ellen Key has taken very little part in the woman suffrage work, and this little only while she was a member of the Board of Directors in the Society for Married Women's Property Rights. During this time, she wrote

<sup>1</sup> Alexandra Gripenberg in her great book, *Reform Work in Bettering Woman's Position*, repeats this false conception, and represents Ellen Key as a type of the erotic naturalism.

for their journals, and gave lectures in Finland, which were published later, in the interest of the Society. After a few years, she resigned from this Society, the only organisation in which she has ever worked, feeling that "Societies are the burying grounds of ideas." But the position of the married woman remained for her the item of chief importance in the work of the liberation of woman. And her *Lifelines* makes evident that this is still the case. Yet from the suffrage camp came charges that she opposed woman's newly won right to participate in all kinds of labour. When they asserted that she admonished women to return to the old degrading condition of sitting caged in the quiet world of home, awaiting a husband, she made the following rejoinder: "Such an opinion cannot well be harboured by any thinking person in an age when the struggle for existence has reached a point where the majority of women must choose between work of any kind or starvation. Least of all can it be the opinion of one who believes in a future where no member of society can withdraw from the duty of work. Without work, woman can win an all-around, intellectual and ethical development no better than man, and woman needs work more than



work needs woman. The woman incapable of work always falls into degrading dependence in one form or another, sometimes the most degrading of all—marriage as a means of support. The woman disinclined to work fills the vacancy in her life with a cult of dilettanteism, nonsense, and adventures of which the most dangerous is marriage for pastime. Hence it is not woman's work that I deplore. But I think the emphasis ought to be laid on the *kind of work*. I pity the women who have no choice, but who are forced by want to accept the first best work offered . . . but I attack those women who in peace and quiet may choose their life vocation, and who yet do not give a thought to so choosing, that the womanly in their nature may find expression in their work. Nature corrects abuses of liberty, but slowly and seriously."

What Ellen Key really has said and what she means is that since emancipation is now as good as accomplished for unmarried women, let us use it rightly in accordance with woman's nature.

The essential difference that exists between man and woman cannot be obliterated. The agitators for women's emancipation go too far when they speak of absolute equality between

man and woman, because Nature prevents such equality even when woman violates her laws.<sup>1</sup>

As the most absurd misunderstandings came to light, and the onsets had to be answered, Ellen Key plunged deeper and deeper into the study of existing conditions, as well as of old and new literature on the subject. She had long observed how the "comedy of love" was being performed on the stage of real life, how ignorance and hypocrisy indiscriminately played a positive rôle even in highly cultured homes. She saw the need of pointing out, from a social, historical, and psychological point of view, the wrong direction to which the woman-emancipation tended, and thus she encountered all those interwoven questions: sex-love, marriage, education. She treats these subjects directly in *Thought-Images*, *The Century of the Child*, *Lifelines*, and, indirectly, in *Men and Works*.

True to her individual disposition, she met these personal attacks with great patience. But, with the passing of the years, she has seen so much of suffering and unhappiness, as

<sup>1</sup> In her later book, *The Woman Movement*, Ellen Key has cleared away some of the misunderstandings caused by "Missbrukad Kvinnokraft," "Kvinnopsykologi och Kvinlig Logik." (*Woman's Energies Misdirected, Woman Psychology and Woman Logic.*)

a consequence of falsely dealing with these questions, that her courage and her feeling of justice have been expressed in a more and more uncompromising teaching of the individual's right to decide his own life, and arrange it according to his own need, provided, however, that life-enlargement is won thereby, which, in Ellen Key's interpretation, means an upward ascending development.

However changing and diverging her utterances may seem, they are only variations in different keys of the same theme, and, to a listening ear, they will blend into a harmonious final chord.

Many have been the causes which have led Ellen Key into a more and more profound consideration of these and similar problems. In the foregoing chapters on Youth, it has been shown that she was bred in the consciousness of great love as the highest factor in life. Through the literature she perused, her eyes were early opened to the sacredness of true marriage. Thus the heart soil was prepared early, and, later in life in her own experiences was sown the seed which grew into tall cypresses. Because only such have grown on her own path, she has expended all her strength in teaching others how to care for their roses.

A Swedish periodical contained the following true *résumé* of Ellen Key's thoughts in regard to the questions mentioned: "Ellen Key is not one of those who dispose of a life question in a week or a couple of years. For decades she revolves it in her mind, before expressing an opinion. What she desires, what direction of the Woman Emancipation she considers ideal, is made plainly evident by her utterances. The sacredness of individuality is the life principle on which must be built the ideal society about which she never will cease to dream. Not through the equality of all, but through the equal opportunities of all, shall the common brotherhood be established. This equalisation requires freedom to develop one's innermost being. That this is not similar in all, Nature herself indicates."

The more perfect all members of society become as individuals, the more need will they have of each other, the stronger will be the fraternisation, and the nearer shall we advance to the great goal of the ideal society: the greatest possible happiness to the greatest possible number. Ellen Key considers the home the foundation of society. In place of education *en masse*, which only tends to similarity instead of to equality, the home ought

to include the school during the child's earliest years, and, through knowledge of his aptitude, he could be led from promiscuous reading to special studies. The greater significance a home holds as an educating factor, the more may be gained in individuality, provided that the children in that home are considered and treated as beings with new individual values to unfold, not to be moulded.

In order to have something to give, however, the homes must draw upon the great cultural values which society at large produces. This production on a big scale is man's special mission, according to his peculiar nature. Man's work tends outward, and produces the life values which society at large has to live on; thus he is a direct supporter of society. Woman supports society indirectly, through her inward-tending activity, as the life principle of the home, and this is especially due to her motherliness, which, to Ellen Key, is identical with her womanliness. Psychologically and physically, the cultivation of the well-being and of the happiness of the family requires all of woman's energies. Personal love is her nature. First in and by love does she create life values on a larger scale. By her greater inborn morality, love attains the

joyous harmony between the physical and spiritual needs. Her mission is to hold the balance between the extreme poles of physical desires and asceticism. And through her positive chastity—not negative purity—spirituality is kept alive in the marriage relation. Her mother nature has not the physical strength that man has, and this influences her mentality, which thereby lacks the larger creative power. If she is a happy wife and mother, she must be a secular genius worthily to fill all the duties of the home and, at the same time, attend to outside activities. Whether mother or not, she is called by her very nature to disperse her forces among the little details so important for the home, which, though smaller links in the world chain, would cause life to collapse if they were broken away.

In the marriage relation, Ellen Key demands full mutual freedom, equality, and love as its only ground. Her desire in the many recurring articles has been to give to the present age a fresh point of view, and a new appraisal of love.

She believes in humanity's development according to natural law, through its own powers to achieve the earthly harmony which is its goal. Not only does she lay bare the

faults, the present conception and its consequences, but she also knows that right through these progress must go. She analyses the many and varied reasons for happiness and unhappiness. In telling illustrations, she points out what it is that holds the marriage intact, and what sunders it. Woman is told that it largely depends on herself if the sun of happiness becomes hidden by storm clouds. She analyses and synthesises. Much may be learned from her debates on love and marriage, originated as they are in deep feeling and keen intelligence. But, in reading all these treatises, though instructive, elevating, and overflowing with beauty of thought and expression, one is not entirely free from a certain fear that by this weighing and balancing of good and evil forces, of happiness and unhappiness, of cause and effect, a sharper light than may be wholesome has fallen on the relationship of husband and wife. It is, for example, not unusual that hearers of popular addresses on diseases, when they have felt the smallest symptom of the malady described, have fainted from fear that this very malady was corroding their own organs. Likewise, it may happen that one who has felt a slight temporary discomfort in the region of the heart,



probably caused by his own carelessness, by reading of all these symptoms of sickness in the marriage relation may imagine himself suffering from some incurable matrimonial ill, and, in weak despair, give up all hope. Ellen Key does not seem to have considered how great a part the eagerness of outsiders to discover bad symptoms in the life of married couples may play. It is not alone the great "Galeotto" but also the best intentioned "soul physicians" who, with their home-cures or operative interventions, may sever as well as unite.

Ellen Key has great power of fascination. She fills our imagination with visions of radiant happiness. But she also frightens by vivid descriptions of how faults on both sides have killed even the tenderest love. In this way there is apt to arise too much introspection. Most marriages would in general profit more if "husband and wife learned to understand that love, like friendship, is a question of forgiveness, and that it consists of a mutual sacrifice of selfish desires," as Hellen Lindgren beautifully expresses it. Artists of life are rare, and few have advanced so far that they do not stand in need of forgiveness. Ellen Key herself says: "Those who believe in a



humanity perfected through love, must learn to count in thousands of years, not in centuries, much less in decades."

Before this perfection takes place, however, much may be changed for the better this very day. And the many astute observations and helpful suggestions that abound in Ellen Key's works may conspire to save those who understand and who desire to be saved!

There is one point in Ellen Key's ethics where she is guilty of a dangerous inconsistency. It is in the matter of the freedom of the will (see *Thought-Images*). "Here it is," she says, "that Vauvenargues develops the deterministic individualism which, though not unassailable from the point of view of logical consistency, is nevertheless assailable from the standpoint of one's experience." The greatest philosophers have encountered the same difficulty so this is no reason for finding fault with Ellen Key.

But to what purpose does she quote Vauvenargues, who has reached the same conclusion as Spinoza, when he says: "We believe ourselves free because we do not know the motives which force us to act. We are not masters of our actions because we are not masters of our natures," when she proceeds

to interpret Vauvenargues' line of thought to mean that just because our will is determined by our nature, that is, primarily by our desires, instincts, and passions, it is principally this domain we ought to investigate and cultivate? Our actions are dependent on our impulses, on the motives which are strongest. Hence the goal of our education and self-development ought to be to *seek* the impulses, *cultivate* the habits, *enhance* the feelings, and *associate* with the thoughts which later may become strong influential motives for our actions. When all this—seeking, cultivation, enhancement, and association—becomes the result of education and self-cultivation which is consciously directed with the intention of governing our desires, instincts, and passions, then are they not acts of will which we ourselves determine? Is it possible to gain a philosophy of life by depending upon a theory that lacks logical consistency? When this lack of freedom of the will is urged as the reason why fidelity in love should not be promised, since love may cease independently of one's will, and accordingly the conscientious hesitate to give their vows, we shrink from the consequences.

But, if we read on we find that Ellen Key

herself contradicts her earlier expressed opinion, and declares that "the intrinsic worth of the personality depends largely on whether fidelity is a *life-value*. One who *desires fidelity*, marshals his impulses, gathers his forces around the essential, guards them from changing winds. Hence the *will to be faithful* is incorporated with one's own integrity, one's inner coherence, one's attitude and dignity of soul." Here Ellen Key obviously refers to our will, which, judging from this last utterance, evidently does not entirely lack in freedom.

Höfdding scores a strong point in his *Ethics* when he says:

"One of the prevailing fallacies is that the will has nothing to do with thought and feeling. . . . Under normal and natural conditions, the will evolves and confirms what thought has embraced, and what feeling has encompassed. The will must be present first and last, only thus can it be of assistance in the fatal moment. The two individuals are not subjected to blind fate. The matter is largely of their own choosing and depends upon whether they take life as a whole seriously or not. Marriage, like all unions, requires self-control and effort to endure."

In *Life-Lines*, ii., Ellen Key has dealt more

at length with the nurture of the soul of which she had already given many stimulating suggestions in *Life-Lines*, i. Yet it seems that the point referred to above constitutes one of the gravest inconsistencies to be laid at her door.

*Life-Lines* aroused a more violent controversy than any of her other works. We are not blind to its faults. Still it has not altered our opinion of the vital nerve in Ellen Key's writings. It must be evident to every one who cares to acknowledge it, that she steadfastly holds to her ideal view of the relation between man and woman, and the life-line she draws is perfectly logical, from her own evolutionary starting-point. But she has hurt her book by giving place with seeming understanding to certain obnoxious anomalies which are foreign to her own idealism, both that of her nature and of her views; and therein lies the danger. Because if on the one hand the book helps to make the strong stronger, on the other hand it doubtless may make the weak weaker.

*Life-Lines*, ii., contained Ellen Key's philosophy of life as a whole. Already in her essay on Rilke in *Ord och Bild*,<sup>1</sup> we had caught a

<sup>1</sup> The foremost Swedish literary magazine, *Word and Picture*.  
—Translator's footnote.

glimpse of the same. The life-will of the new beings is here explained. "Full and warm it embraces all the richness of life, great and gentle, it bows to necessity; fresh and courageous, it looks toward the future."<sup>1</sup>

Though tempted to give more space to this subject, we must turn to other questions treated by Ellen Key. First by learning to know her many-sidedness do we get the true picture of her. Most of the chapters in *Thought-Images*, *The Century of the Child*, and *Men* have previously been the subject of lectures and essays printed in various magazines. The date is purposely given in order to repudiate the oft-repeated charges of the great impressionability of Ellen Key. It has been said that she has been influenced by the author last read. Efforts have been made to make her "harmless" by thus lessening the impression of her keen insight into the needs of the age. But those who have followed her development have observed how gradually this has unfolded. With an inner consistency, she has gone her own way, and allowed nothing to turn her aside. She has always avoided giving

<sup>1</sup> Her latest book, *Men and Works*, makes additional contributions toward a better understanding of her life-faith, which is therein illustrated with living examples.

her oath of allegiance, has ever hated dogmas, and has wanted life in its entirety. Those who are easily impressed, generally acquire opinions quickly, and change them just as quickly. Ellen Key, on the contrary, is extremely conservative in her emotional life, and has but tardily completed the process of development which her own life and experiences, as well as outward circumstances and environment, have induced.

Previously to the books mentioned above, Ellen Key had published three smaller works on social and political questions, the most important of which is *Individualism and Socialism*.<sup>1</sup> She had long thought on socialism, and wished to see its theories justified, although her strongly individualistic nature was rather repelled than attracted by it. The indignation inherited from her mother, at all social injustices, and the insight, gained at her father's side, of how wrongly a liberal movement often is judged from the outside, prepared her to understand socialism. Her warm interest in its teaching was not aroused, however, until there began to be heard the

<sup>1</sup> *Individualism and Socialism* was published in book-form in 1895, but had earlier been the subject of a lecture in Christiania and Upsala.

voices of those trying to solve the great social problem, the mutual interfusion of *Individualism and Socialism*.

In a review of this book of Ellen Key's, Professor Gustaf Steffen said: "So far as I know there has not been written, either in English, German, or French, any comprehensive popular treatise which, with such fearless independence, such straightforwardness in argument, inspiring confidence, such epigrammatically pointed language, poetic and polished form, has wrestled with the newest of all questions, viz., how to find the *higher unity* which harmonises the individualistic and socialistic tendencies of our age. . . . An exhaustive contrast study of Nietzsche's and Tolstoy's ideas is one of the most alluring undertakings that our day has to offer an essayist like Ellen Key, with her sure instinct for the inner unity of nature's organic contrasts."

The final pages in the last chapter are an exhortation to the youth of other countries to follow the example which England then afforded. Seeing youth influenced by the spirit of reaction, she tried to inspire in them hopes for the future and desire for action, with words like these: "The noble age of youth is capable



of feeling compassion simultaneously with a strong individual consciousness of power. And there are some who, in this respect, remain ever young, ever ready for moments of inspiration, moments when a great deed, a great truth, a great beauty, or a great happiness fills the being, moments when the tears well up, arms stretch to embrace the universe, and thoughts traverse it. At such moments we are most intensely conscious of our own personality, at the same time we feel merged in complete sympathy and oneness with all of life. A great life—to give continuity in action to such inspired moments!” Fortunate indeed the youth who receives such admonition.

When the labourers in Norrland and Halland were fighting for union rights, Ellen Key was ready at once to give her work and strength to serve the aim which they desired to win, and did win. In Karlstad, Upsala, and Stockholm during the Christmas and Easter holidays, she gave four lectures, afterwards edited and published in one volume, entitled: *Svensk och Storsvensk Patriotism* (Swedish and Greater Swedish Patriotism).

This brochure consists of three chapters without separate headings. All three aim toward the same goal—freedom from oppres-



sion. In the first chapter, Ellen Key turns against the "world power which enslaves the spirit, the whole social-economic system under which wills are being bowed."

Proceeding from great ideal view-points, she gives us glimpses of the demoralising influences which power exercises in various departments of life. In hasty review there pass before our eyes, pictures of capitalism with sword drawn in defence of its economic interests; of Germany trampling the Danish nationality in Sönderjylland; of Russia destroying the Finnish Constitution; of France performing the Dreyfus drama.

We grow justly indignant with it all. But, she asks, have we nothing to vex us nearer home? And she proceeds to draw a strong contrast between the deep indignation which we feel at outrages against liberty occurring abroad, and the apathetic unconcern with which we tolerate iniquities in our own country. She deplures the fact that apathy and egotism to a great extent fill the place with young and old which ideal enthusiasm ought to hold, and that one may find the youth shrugging their shoulders and saying: "What is the use?" when they ought to be up in arms against prejudice and injustice.

The warning Ellen Key here directed to youth had a decidedly quickening influence on many of the young men who heard her lecture in Upsala, or who read her brochure. Some expressed themselves afterwards as so impressed by her words that sleep had fled that night. Thanks to the enthusiasm of these young students, the brochure was widely spread, and it may be said without exaggeration that this address set its stamp on that generation of youth whom it reached.

The second chapter deals with the rights of Unionism. Clear-sighted and just as Ellen Key is, she takes the part neither of employer nor of employee. In regard to this polemical subject she desires legal contracts on both sides and arbitration established by law. Union rights must be recognised as absolute and inviolable. Now, as always, she takes the side of the oppressed, consequently in this conflict she takes the part of the labourers who were denied the right to organise.

She pleads for liberty as against despotism and finally says: "We talk of needing fortifications against possibly dangerous neighbours, but the fortification we especially have need of is a flaming hatred of oppression of any kind, a passionate energy of freedom, with-

out which other fortifications are of little avail."

In the third chapter, she brings her countrymen face to face with the Norwegian question, in regard to which she considers the Swedish feeling of liberty and justice even more undefined and vague than it is with reference to the question of union rights.

Long preparation, confirmed principles, and thorough knowledge of the subject, preceded Ellen Key's utterances, now, as always. Through her friendship with Björnson she learned early in life to understand the import of the question from the Norwegian point of view. And, during the many years that she was actively interested in Swedish politics with her father, she learned to differentiate Swedish and Greater Swedish patriotism.

Among the notes she made during Björnson's visit to Stockholm in 1873, there is the following referring to Norway and Sweden: "In our conscious assurance of being the greater, older, and more illustrious people, we are unable to feel genuine sympathy with Norway, now that it wants to go its own way and try its own strength, before perfectly amalgamating with us, as we would like. The two countries are like two brothers, of

whom the elder, whose prestige is recognised and whose power is manifest, proposes to the younger, who has neither the one nor the other, that they combine their land, share everything,—equal rights and equal duties,—and receives the pertinent answer: 'No, thanks! That means that you would be master, for you are more able to benefit me than I you! And none would believe me capable of anything, and I would never learn to depend on myself even when I might do so with profit. No! Leave me alone. Let me fare badly, if need be, just so that I attain my own stature. Maybe when I am a grown man, we may unite, for then our forces would be equal, and we may pull evenly, something we cannot do now.'

*"Laws which are not forms for a content become irritating bonds, and the true content—love between nations—cannot be created thereby. Therefore, let love alone, and it will slowly grow in peace by itself. A day will come when the two peoples will clasp hands to form an indissoluble union with legal bond. But before that day we shall have to mingle blood and tears, have mutual memories and mutual joys. And if that time does not come in the way we Swedes want, or find to*

*our* liking, if we instead come to have three republics in the north—which is what Björnstjerne Björnson wants—well, no matter, if only the hearts be one. . . .”

Few things better illustrate to what degree the ideas for which Ellen Key logically and consistently contended in mature age had already germinated in her mind in youth. The fundamental thought found in these notes recurs in her dealing with this question, as in all questions which she discusses: “Laws which are not form for a content ought not to exist. A union, whether between nations or individuals, which does not rest upon a solid foundation, that of mutual happiness, should be dissolved.”

In those days of preparation, when many Swedes insisted that a union saved by war was preferable to a union dissolved, when brother-war was advised as a national duty, Ellen Key proclaimed her opinion that each and all would be in their full right to denounce such patriotism as a crime, not alone against Norway, but also against the noble past of our own nation, against the present generation as well as the future.

She was harshly judged from many sides for her lack of patriotism, for hostile talk, and this

because, with true national feeling, she had counselled the Swedish people to act like Swedes, that is—justly, intelligently, nobly, and sanely. While she may have over-estimated the Norwegian national spirit, that only shows the natural one-sidedness of that righteousness which forces one to close the eyes to the weakness of the person one believes oppressed. Ellen Key, as she herself says, is no Norway fanatic. She does not absolve Norway from all blame in the Union conflict. She concedes that the Norwegian politicians have occupied themselves too much with party politics instead of principles, with side issues instead of the main cause. But she also points out what had been accomplished in Norway during the nineties alone, in the line of political, judicial, religious, and social justice, and remarks that nearly all of these reforms had been repeatedly proposed during these years in our Swedish Riksdag, but had been turned down; and she adds: "Since from my point of view the expression of justice and humanity in legislation is the most deeply effective work of civilisation, I consider it proven that in regard to this kind of culture Norway shows itself an able, active youth, tied to one temporarily crippled." However

much one bewailed and lamented such "treachery toward her fatherland," there are few at present who can deny that she was right in her comparison, at the time and place she applied it.<sup>1</sup>

In this connection may be mentioned another action in a certain sense political. Ellen Key was the first Swede who, following the changed conditions in Finland in the fall of 1899, went there and gave a series of lectures,<sup>2</sup> in the crowded assembly hall of the University, and thus manifested the willingness of the Swedes to keep up the spiritual intercourse between the two peoples. She chose the French Salons as her subject, so as to get a chance in her last discourse, which dealt with Madame de Staël, to express indirectly the thoughts and emotions stirring the minds of the audience.

The lively sympathies Ellen Key aroused in Finland, and of which the papers bore witness, in spite of their constraint, found their final expression in the farewell festival which was arranged in her honour, members

<sup>1</sup> At the time of the disruption of the Union in 1905, Ellen Key came before the public with a discourse in favour of peace at Heden in Gothenbourg, and in the autumn she gave the address which was later published under the title: *The Future of Scandinavianism*.

<sup>2</sup> Later published in *Ateneum*.



of the scientific, artistic, and literary world taking part. Ellen Key had remained in Helsingfors over the 11th of December, wanting to avoid any celebration of her fiftieth birthday, never thinking that any one in Helsingfors knew the significance of that day. But in this she was mistaken. The farewell banquet became a birthday festival, at which Professor V. Söderhjelm and Helena Vestermark eloquently expressed the sympathies already aroused by Ellen Key's writings and which were now greatly strengthened by her visit.<sup>1</sup>

In the spring of 1900, Ellen Key went abroad, spending four months in London, England, and Scotland, then going on to Brittany and Paris at the time of the great world exposition, continuing on to Italy, making a long stay in Rome, and shorter visits to Naples and Sicily, and returning home in June, 1901, by way of Vienna, Dresden, and Berlin. The columns of Vienna's foremost newspapers showed by their de-

<sup>1</sup> Her impressions of this visit are described in a publication entitled: *In Finland and Russia*. She has also published her *Thoughts on Peace, The Peace Movement and Culture* (Fram's Pub. Co.), and *Addresses to the Youth of Sweden*, all touching more or less on the same sphere of ideas as the above-mentioned booklets.



scriptions the great attention paid Ellen Key. From the many speeches made in honour of Ellen Key we may quote the following significant phrase: "You have sown words, and you shall harvest people. We love you."<sup>1</sup>

Ever since Ellen Key wrote her first obituary of Ernst Ahlgren, she has often had the grievous occasion of writing about departed friends. She has done this in such a way that one can well understand Hellen Lindgren, who once said of Ellen Key's obituaries that one almost wished to die to have her write about one. Karl August Tavaststjerna, K. af Geijerstam,<sup>2</sup> and Hellen Lindgren belong to those of whom Ellen Key has written after death.

The space does not allow further mention of these or other of her shorter or longer biographical and literary essays, first published in different periodicals, and of which later those on C. J. L. Almqvist, The Brownings, Goethe, Rahel Varnhagen, Malvida von Meysenbug, and Björnson (a greeting on his seventieth birthday), published in book form, are best known. There is so much less need

<sup>1</sup> Her lecture in Vienna was delivered in German, and the subject was the life-work of the late Arthur Hazelius.

<sup>2</sup> Swedish writers.—Translator's footnote.

to speak of these, as the value of no part of Ellen Key's authorship is less disputed. The same may be said of her tracts in the Verdandi series and certain short essays, such as "Courage," "Stillness," etc., which first came out in Christmas magazines.<sup>1</sup>

It has been said that Ellen Key's writings suffer from a lack of logic and order. The reason for this is that when she proceeds to form her thoughts into words the artist in her compels her hand to draw the mists of poetry across the contours and thus they become somewhat less distinct. Moreover, the wealth of colour in her style dazzles the eyes of those who consider precise etching the greater art.

Although concurring in the main in the above general criticism in regard to Ellen Key's want of consistency, we want, on the other hand, to endorse Per Hallström's counsel to readers of Ellen Key's works: "When stumbling over a sentence that seems absurd in its categorical formulation, do not cry: 'Alas!' Simply make a mental note of it, and read on. Sooner or later you are almost certain to find—though possibly in quite

<sup>1</sup> Another little work, *The Education of the People*, uniform with the pamphlets *Culture* and *Beauty for All*, Ellen Key gave to the Good Templar Order to help them in their educational movement.

another connection—the complementary contradiction and restriction made by herself and often much better, juster, and broader than the reader in the heat of the moment could have made it.”

## CHAPTER VII

### THE LAST YEARS IN STOCKHOLM

AN episode in Ellen Key's life, which ought to have a place in her biography, is her speech at the Ibsen Festival, and the resulting storm, which found its outlet partly in a protest signed by two hundred and eighty-one Swedish women, printed by request in all the Stockholm papers, and partly in the conflicting opinions expressed by the various newspapers throughout the country. Two hundred and fifty persons attended the Ibsen banquet, and enthusiastically applauded Ellen Key's address to the guest of honour. Ellen Key had been out of town at the time of Ibsen's visit to Stockholm, but was appealed to by telegram, and begged to return to "voice the feelings of the Swedish women." Having previously paid personal homage to Ibsen, in an address of greeting on his seventieth birthday, and also in her lectures in Stockholm before the Federated Highschools' Society and

New Idun, having expressed her conception of Ibsen and women, she had good reason to suppose that her ideas were known. Consequently, she abandoned what she has called "her good habit of speaking for herself alone," although she had even then caused fierce opposition, it was naturally much worse now; for Swedish women felt themselves called upon to protest against a speech which proclaimed to the world, at home and abroad, that they had entered upon a new epoch, had received a new religion, new ideals, and that their old ideals of morality now belonged to the "land whose sun had set." One can hardly blame these two hundred and eighty women, who spoke only for themselves, as they too were "Swedish women!"

During that spring, while so many minds were afire, exaggerations were made by those who defended, as well as by those who attacked. The best contribution is to be found in *Svenska Dagbladet* of 18 May, 1898. In this article, all interested in the question are advised to consider what the now generally respected Henrik Ibsen, who became classical, even before his death, had to say in regard to the "liberation of the personality," and this advice is especially directed to the protesting

ladies, a majority of whom, without doubt, would be found to be Ibsen admirers, but who misconstrue his ideas when expressed through Ellen Key.

Our memory may be refreshed by a recapitulation of what Ibsen has said in *Brand*, in *The Doll's House*, *Ghosts*, in poetry, letters, and addresses, and we shall then find how close Ellen Key's line of thought kept to his.

The consequences of her Ibsen speech must have proved to Ellen Key that she was right in her instinct to avoid as much as possible all public tasks. Her antipathy to club work of every kind has been as strong as it has been consistent. Except in the Society for Married Women's Property Rights, Ellen Key has been active only in Tolfterna and in New Idun. The purpose of this latter society was discussed and accepted by a small group of ladies, of whom Ellen Key was one. There had long existed in Stockholm a men's society called Idun, and, in 1885 these ladies decided to form a women's society after the same pattern; the object being to offer opportunity for stimulating social intercourse and exchange of ideas. The members of New Idun are recruited from the women artists and brain-workers of Stockholm, and the object of the

Society is to see to it that notables visiting Stockholm are brought into contact with the intellectual world of the capital. Ellen Key proposed Dr. Ellen Fries as the first president and was induced to take the vice-presidency herself; but when Ellen Fries sent in her resignation on account of illness, the Society urged Ellen Key to become president, and this office she held for many years. One of the members, writing about her in this capacity, says: "Ellen Key possesses all the qualities which grace a chairman—perfect delivery, dignity, and humour combined, in born eagerness to bring souls together, impartiality in the most chivalrous manner, broad culture, warm interest in everything, a genius for arrangement without being practical in the ordinary sense, and finally a great ability quickly to make a position clear and to decide upon a course."

In addition to the annoying persecution, which ensued after the controversy on the woman question, it may be mentioned that intrigues played their part in New Idun in an endeavour to remove Ellen Key from the presidency which she had filled so well. But as this Society had a number of high-minded and upright women among its members, this plot failed entirely, and Ellen Key was retained

in the chair until the fall of 1900, when, going abroad to remain a year, she sent in her resignation, to which she has since adhered in spite of re-election. Before she left Stockholm, a pretty festival was arranged by members of New Idun, and the Society expressed in various ways what Ellen Key had been to them. Nothing but her interest in the new literature induced her to accept the membership offered her in Albert Bonnier's Stipendium fund, formed in 1901, and from which she withdrew at fifty-five years of age, according to its statutes.

After Ellen Key's last lecture at the People's Institute, in 1903, which was also the last evening of her life in Stockholm, and which happened to be the 30th of April—Walpurgis Eve—a great number of friends gathered in the ballroom of the Hotel Rydberg to take farewell of her. A solemn as well as festive spirit animated those present. Genial addresses were made in her honour, and she was thanked for the Walpurgis fires of stimulating ideas which she had kindled in our minds. The following words are quoted from her utterances on this occasion:

“. . . It is not from cowardice or weariness that I retire from this field of action. To all



of us, and especially is this true of me, there comes a time in life when we desire to make a halt, to gather ourselves together, and ponder past experiences. Moreover, I am country born, and the country calls me.

“It has been said here to-night that I have sown seeds and kindled fires. I am deeply conscious that the seeds might have been more fully ripe, and that the fires might have shone clearer, and been less dimmed by smoke.

“I have taken part in the life-fate of so many and have had to give out so much of myself in small coin, that I now feel I must allow myself solitude, in order to be more to the few, and be able to give more to the many.”

That Ellen Key left Stockholm and the life which would have held fascination for most people—being surrounded by admiring and grateful listeners and a steadily increasing circle of friends—was not the result, as some supposed, of being wearied by the simultaneously increasing slander and misunderstanding. It was the result rather of her feeling that she was unable to give to all these friends all that they expected, and also of the great demand for free lectures and private advice.

Ellen Key does not belong to those who drop

old friends for new; any misunderstanding with a friend causes her anguish, and while the bitterest attacks are not likely to give her a sleepless night, the fear of having wounded some one's sensibility may do so. For such a nature, each new relationship is an exercise that calls upon the very forces of the soul, and, when it is known, besides, that Ellen Key personally answers all inquiries, never avoids doing any one a service, but on the contrary even takes pains to invent them, devoting time and strength thereto, it may readily be understood how overworked she must have been during the last years in Stockholm.

Moreover, it is characteristic of her to be moved passionately by the fate of others, and to grieve over their wrongs. In her nature are combined the traits of both father and mother, forming an individuality dissimilar to either. She herself says that this combination is so perfect that she has one far-sighted and one near-sighted eye, gifts from each parent! From persons who have known both, we learn that Ellen inherits her strong emotions from her mother, also the exceeding modesty which always makes her as grateful for the simplest kindness and as unable to make demands as

when she was a little girl at Sundsholm. And from her father, we know her to have inherited, a sunny, kindly disposition and the ability to be just and noble in combat. Both parents were hot-tempered, and this disposition has descended in full strength to Ellen Key; her quick perception makes her very impatient with the slowness of others. It is true that she has such self-control that few persons know of this fault, but she herself declares that she at least "several times a year sees red, and feels murder!" Her strong hatred of all injustice makes it hard for her to endure wrongs toward herself, although she is magnanimously forgiving. And she does not find it difficult to make kind replies to sharp opponents of her views, if such opponents otherwise hold her respect. In private life she never makes propaganda of her opinions,—nay, she considers it a duty not to disturb any faith by which a person really lives. The sparkling wit which sometimes flashes forth never beguiles her into joking over serious subjects, not even in the jolliest conversation.

In connection with this characterisation of Ellen Key's personal life, which we have endeavoured to give here, we cannot refrain from some expression of the bitter pain which

all her friends feel that her dutiful life among us has been the subject of the most shameful slander on the part of those who believed thereby to deaden the influence of her words.

Ever since 1889, she has been subject to public attacks, vile slander, and abuse, indecent anonymous letters, brazen lies about her private life, and insinuations uttered by "cultured" ladies in private gatherings. Though all this has been extremely painful to her womanly sensitiveness, she has persisted with her work, though grown so shy of people that, during the last years in Stockholm, she never showed herself in public except when on the lecture platform. One of the many preposterous lies spread about her, which went the round even of the Stockholm clergy, and was related as a "fact," was that she had a grown daughter. How did such a story originate? In this wise: A young girl who did not want to trouble Ellen Key with calls, but who was an eager listener at her lectures, used to write her inquiries touching on matters of intimate importance. And she took the liberty of calling Ellen Key "little mother," feeling a spiritual daughterly relation to her. Ellen Key left the letter lying open, and some one

who glanced at it then officiously spread the gossip.<sup>1</sup>

Of like character, or still more unreasonable, are all other stories about Ellen Key, or about persons with whose erotic life she is supposed to have interfered.

Ellen Key's naïveté is so great that a child may fool her with some simple ruse time and again in succession, and this credulity, this lack of suspicion, light-hearted good humour, in other words, this simplicity which so endears her to her friends—though at the same time causing them much apprehension for her—is incomprehensible to her enemies. They have not even blushed to direct indecent questions to her in public about her private life, an impudence which they have excused by saying that there could be nothing insulting in the presumption that "Miss Key lived as she preached." People forget that a woman of Ellen Key's age has good reason to believe herself able to speak on these subjects as one personally outside of them, and also that a woman with Ellen Key's public courage ought to be able to believe herself protected from the

<sup>1</sup> The gossip related in *Svarta Fanor* (Black Banners), by August Strindberg, is one example among the many of the slanderous tales which have appeared in print about Ellen Key.

suspicion of not having openly shouldered the consequences of her private actions. When Ellen Key stands as a single woman before the world, it means that she is single in fact.

I have never belonged to Ellen Key's intimate circle; my more conservative nature has even kept me on the outskirts, and I have often felt trepidation at her uncompromising desire for freedom, and the bold language concerning debatable principles into which she is sometimes beguiled by her ardent temperament. Yet we have long been friends. Midsummer-Eve, of 1876, Ellen Key arrived at my country home, eagerly expected, as I had heard her much spoken of. She made only a short visit, but she produced an impression for life. What first attracted me was the noble simplicity of her nature. Her conversation was engrossing, and she had a rare ability of choosing suitable subjects for each member of our large household, where, as is often the case in the country, even outsiders were present at meals, generally as quiet listeners only. But Ellen Key, with her fine amiability, knew how to make all feel at their ease. One subject led to another and the atmosphere was one of good feeling and pleasure. A great void was felt when she left,

and that is the common experience in the circles she leaves, because she always searches out the best in people. That is the secret of the delight one feels in her nearness.

During all the years which have passed since then, I have always found her the same, and I have been near enough to observe her personal life, which is very simple. It has often touched me deeply to notice how hard worked and lonely she seemed, when she has stopped for a moment's visit—rich and unforgettable for me—on her way to the People's Institute, or from luncheon at the house-keeping school. This home lover, this hostess,—so attractive at the little parties she sometimes gave where many charming women gathered, a curious mingling of aristocratic relatives with her democratic friends,—would go in all weathers to get her meals in the simplest possible way; and that too, in spite of her fine, cultivated taste, and her appreciation of "pure Rhine wine poured in a Venetian glass." And of her own accord, she chose this extremely plain living, for she might have arranged her mode of life, in later years at least, more in keeping with her person. But then she would not have been able, by free lectures and other direct help, to have



made so many people happy, nor perhaps have looked forward in old age to an independence indispensable for her. And her "art of living" has always been to choose and strive for the values in life most essential to herself.

Ellen Key has during middle age gained a health and strength which her delicate constitution in youth did not promise. The wholesome regular life which she has led has done much to produce this happy result. She has had simple habits in food and drink, and has led a healthy out-of-door life, although athletics, as practised in the cities, have never attracted her. She is still a good walker and swimmer, and, however precious time may have been to her, she has abstained from night work. Strictly dutiful in her work, her habit has been to retire early, and rise early, and, immediately after her bath, to take a long tramp in the woods. One of her nearest friends—who has told me much of what I am here relating of Ellen Key's characteristics—used sometimes to call for her on these walks. One morning she said, as she entered her room: "Have you time to go out to-day? you have your lecture on the 'Century of the Child' this evening." Ellen Key answered calmly, "Why, certainly, that lecture I have been



preparing in my mind since I was four years old." When they reached the woods, Ellen Key was in the midst of an interesting talk which held her friend's attention so that she did not notice that she was about to step on a flower. Ellen Key suddenly held her back, exclaiming: "Don't you see the flower? It is also a life!" To be considerate of all lives, even that of a poor unnoticed little flower, is characteristic of her.

I remember the many times she has refused to come to evening parties, especially during her years of teaching. The answer used to be: "No, thank you. I can't be up at night for I must be up early, and prepare to fulfil my duties. A tired teacher is good for nothing." She was seldom seen at the theatres, and only music, especially symphony concerts, tempted her. During the thirty years she lived in Stockholm, she has hardly been seen more than ten times at public social gatherings, or café parties, so distasteful was this life to her.

One of her simple habits was to travel third class, even on night journeys. The cigarette-smoking, which many consider unbecoming to women, she has never indulged in; her mother did not like to see women smoke; she respected her mother's feeling. Of wine, she tastes only

the lighter kinds, and this seldom and sparingly. Thus, the image of Ellen Key as an apostle of self-indulgence is as unlike her as possible. On the contrary, her many friends see in her a remarkably controlled person, and in regard to all the pleasures of life extremely abstemious. Ellen Key has been wont to say that nothing is better for a rich man's children than to be brought up as poor, for wealth may disappear, as happened in her own case, but hardihood, wherewith to meet all vicissitudes in life, remains.

In the different little homes she has had in Stockholm, 1884, 16 Villa Street, from the autumn of 1892, 15 Valhalla Road, and from the autumn of 1895, 49 Valhalla Road she had arranged things very pleasantly. Though having to walk up and down four flights of stairs many times a day, yet when she had reached her haven and closed the door, she felt happy and at peace and enjoyed concentrating on her work surrounded by her own familiar things. In her home, which consisted principally of a large living and work room combined, one learned to know her and what she means, perhaps better than by her books. "Beauty for All" is, for instance, not easy to comprehend, but one who visited Ellen Key



ELLEN KEY.

PHOTOGRAPH BY PERMISSION OF SLENDERS FORLAG, COPENHAGEN.



would understand the words of Ehrensvärd which she quotes in that essay: "It is almost incredible how beautiful a thing becomes when we see a reason for it." Her bedroom was furnished with her grandfather's writing-desk, and the old and worn toilet table which had belonged to her grandmother; her father's sofa served as her bed, and, on the opposite wall, hung her mother's portrait, and photographs of her dead friends, and of Sundsholm, Björnö, and Kallernäs. In the larger room, stood her own writing-table with the Eros bust from the Vatican, and comfortable pieces of furniture, almost all from the old home, among them a little chair and sofa, which had been her own since she was four years old, bookshelves, paintings and sketches done by her friends, some of them our foremost artists. Over her resting place hung a large photograph of Böcklin's *Island of Death*, also a relief medallion of her father, the handsome features in life size, and around it a great laurel wreath which had been given to her. And then books everywhere, lying at hand on all tables, and during the whole winter, flowers often given her at the lectures at the People's Institute where they had been brought by unknown friends, and whence they had been

carried to Ellen Key's home by devoted listeners.

On week-days her door was closed, but for some hours on Sundays she would see every one who wished to speak with her,<sup>1</sup> usually on some important errand of their own, or about some cause they held in common. The hostess tried to satisfy all without forcing herself on any one. To see to it that people who might enjoy each other would meet, has, for years, been one of the things that made her happy, and many bonds of friendship have been formed in Sweden and in Europe, with Ellen Key as mediator.

Seeing Ellen Key in her lonely home it was impossible to ward off the thought of how meaningless life is; for however much one may be comforted in thinking that this very loneliness has caused her to be so much to so many, one cannot help but wonder what can have caused her to remain alone. A woman who has not had an opportunity to marry is a rare phenomenon. And when a woman like Ellen Key has remained single, only a low mind can interpret her emphasis of the importance of love and motherhood as an expression of an

<sup>1</sup> Ellen Key has never had a telephone in her home, not even in her present and permanent home, Strand.

old maid's desire for marriage! Those who care to understand, feel that Ellen Key speaks as one who does not consider herself or her own fate although doomed by fate to be among those who "sit alone by solitary fires." And her strength lies in not having lost the feeling for the great values of life, with all her heart she desires for others what she has not herself. Whatever the cause of Ellen Key's singleness may have been, one cannot but wonder at the amazing manner in which her views of the happiness of love as the highest life value have been interpreted, interpretations by which she would have deemed her own life valueless. Many know how rich Ellen Key has made her lonely life, and it has indeed not been easy for her to believe that she could be misinterpreted to such an extent as that she would have all women return to the kitchen hearth and the nursery, while she herself was engaged in large public activities. It has been all the harder for her to understand this, as the consistency between her words and her actions is one of the strong traits in her character, and if she had wanted to turn women back to private life she herself would have been the first to return thither.

Ellen Key has never taken part in public

charity, the value of which she doubts, but many little acts point to her strong social feeling, acts which "charitable" folk would do well to imitate. For instance, she has never sent New Year cards since she heard of a postman who was prostrated one New Year's day! Neither has she, since her first visits to a circus, a horse-race, vaudeville, and comic opera when she formed her own opinion of them, ever again sought like amusements, finding them valueless. Many similar traits could be related of her. And with all this she possesses the calmest courage to follow her own convictions and to brave all storms when driven into them by her own inner necessity. It is worthy of mention that she was found among the speakers<sup>1</sup> at Ladugårdsgärdet,<sup>2</sup> one first of May, to the horror of all her friends, except such as were socialists.

Ellen Key is never led by anything but her own innermost intuition, and, for her, defiance for its own sake is as foreign as the love of battle for the sake of battle. And when, in 1903, she left the community where she had withstood so many onslaughts, it was neither faint-heartedness nor discouragement which

<sup>1</sup> In behalf of a normal workday for women.

<sup>2</sup> A large open field on the outskirts of Stockholm.



drove her away. It was, as already noted, her deep yearning for the country, a yearning which had been present during all the years in Stockholm. This longing did not, however, attain its original goal—the home of her childhood—as she explained in an interview. When the question was put to her as to where she wished to live, she answered: “My parental home, Sundsholm, where I was born and where I spent the happy years of my childhood, is now in the hands of strangers. Never again may I return there. But thither I yearn with my whole heart, though in vain. How happy I should be if I could procure that bit of soil, if it were vouchsafed me to enter Sundsholm as its owner, to be allowed to arrange and direct and work there, to see the trees blossom and the grass grow in the place where my soul and all my being have their roots, and to sleep in the little gable room where I dreamt the dreams of my childhood.” From her childhood home and her paradise, the little gable room at Sundsholm, Ellen Key was driven out into the bustling world to assist in the building of new homes for new people. Her youth and her dream life she carries with her, and wherever she has her home youth and visions will accompany her as long as she lives.

## SUPPLEMENT

EIGHT years have passed since my biography of Ellen Key first appeared. Now that this revised edition is to be published in an English translation, there is so much more to be said that I feel the necessity of adding a supplement.

The name of Ellen Key has increasingly won a recognised and elevated place among contemporary thinkers. In all Europe, and gradually in America, she has come to be of great importance for the highest development of humanity.

In her own country appreciation has been slow. "With the strength and swiftness of a storm-wind, her reputation spread over Europe," as some one has said, but in Sweden we could not, would not understand. One of our most prominent critics<sup>1</sup> gives so good an explanation of this that I wish to quote him: "Sweden is not yet ripe for an authorship of her kind. As a general thing we avoid

<sup>1</sup> The young philosopher, Dr. John Landquist.

discussion of moral and psychological phenomena. Our culture has been divided into two opposing camps; on the one side the orthodox religions, on the other the purely æsthetic, which was supposed to precede the radical culture party. . . . With us it is considered greatest to romance over the fate and conflict of the soul; but to study the life of the soul, without accessory of myth and outward events, to compare, to seek a norm, to surmise, and to shape that perfection, the craving for which lies at the very root of every struggle, to write about the universal and the ideal—this has been considered an occupation of lower grade, and of less importance.” In other countries it has not been so. Theoretical and moral interest in the potent forces in human life are more developed, freer from prejudice, and more desirous of truth. Consequently she has been hailed with enthusiasm in the greater civilised countries, and her books have been published in ten European languages, some in fifteen editions, others in seven and eight.

When the first volumes of her monumental work, *Life-Lines*, came out, she left Sweden for some years, contemplating a permanent stay abroad. She made long stops in Germany, Austria, Hungary, Holland, Belgium, Switzer-

land, France, and Italy. The summer of 1894 she spent, in solitude, in a little peasant cottage in Värmland, in the neighbourhood where Erik Gustaf Geijer<sup>1</sup> was born, while she finished *Life-Lines*, iii. In 1895, she went on a many months' lecture tour in Germany, and she created such enthusiasm wherever she went that the houses were always crowded when she ascended the platform.

Love and yearning for her motherland brought her back to Sweden, to the joy of all who appreciate her; and their number has steadily increased. One begins to understand that Ellen Key's teaching of Freedom is fundamentally a teaching of loyalty to all that is genuine in all relations of life, and her teaching of purity is beginning to be appreciated more and more by the younger generation. Her greatest victory is, that pure-minded young men have made their own her demands of true marriage. One of the prettiest proofs of this is, that she has been immortalised through a stylistic portrait in oils by Einar Nielson, a Danish artist. He represents her as a seeress, somewhat of a sibyl, a high priestess of life, and has made this inscription on his work: *Havde jeg kunnet give Din Aands*

<sup>1</sup> Swedish poet.

*renhed!* (Would I could have expressed the purity of thy spirit!) The original was presented, by admirers of Ellen Key's life-work, to the National Museum, where it has a prominent place.

In several sympathetic reviews of *Life-Lines*, ii, our younger philosophers put Ellen Key on a high pedestal. They estimate her as Sweden's greatest woman since Saint Birgit. Among those who rendered her homage on her sixtieth birthday, we find many young enthusiasts, some of them our most prominent men authors. In an essay on Ellen Key, one young critic writes: "The theory of evolution has become religion in the soul of Ellen Key; it has deepened to religious thought—the growth of the soul, considered as a step in the world development,—that is the aim of her teaching."

There are many more I should like to quote, if space allowed. Ellen Key's sixtieth birthday was a jubilee. Tribute was paid to her by great men and women at home and abroad. The entire press, with the exception of the pietistic papers, united in singing the praises of Ellen Key's pure and noble personality. Grateful and admiring words rained upon her, as blessed manna in the desert. Thinking that

it might interest her American friends, I have given in an appendix some of the utterances that appeared in the press on that occasion.

Philosophical opponents also joined the host of those who honoured the remarkable woman, who even in America, has been called the greatest living woman. The best and most lasting tribute she received from her publisher, and personal friend, Karl Otto Bonnier, owner of the Albert Bonnier Publishing Co., when, on her sixtieth birthday, he published the essay, *Ellen Key*, by John Landquist. This little book should be read by all who wish to understand Ellen Key. Here we are treated to an estimate of Ellen Key, the woman and author, which, in my opinion, is the right one, showing deep understanding, and making clear the secret of her successes, as well as of her failures. The extraordinary phenomenon of her individuality, the cultural *milieu* in which she moved, the epoch in which she produced her work, all receive their right interpretation. But, it may be said of this book what the author says of Ellen Key's work, which I have already quoted: "We in Sweden are not yet ripe,"—we do not care, consequently we are not able to understand.

It is to be hoped that John Landquist's

analysis of Ellen Key and her work will be translated into the languages in which she is discussed.

Ellen Key's open letter of thanks which the press printed, I quote in full: "For the first time in sixty years I ask the press to give place to a personal communication, as I am unable to thank privately all those who have cast sunshine over the entrance to the autumn of my life-work.

"Perhaps I should have expressed my thanks by publishing those greetings in which many have united. But I hope no one will interpret this omission as wanting in gratitude.

"When I went away about the 11th of December, to seek perfect solitude, it was to gather quietude for my memories, and for self-examination. When you stand at the milestone that tells you with certainty that the greater road length lies behind you, then, if ever, you need to hold a day of reckoning with yourself. If you have heretofore reproached Life for having robbed you of so much, of what you loved most, for having denied you so much of what you most desired—on such a day it is only self-accusations that you hear, reproaches for your failures toward people and for your neglect toward life itself.

“With these feelings I returned from the solitude of the forest and was met with a flood of sun and light. What could I do but bow my head in humility, and invoke Life for more and greater power, the better to deserve all this kindness.

“In the hope that this prayer may be granted, I extend to all my sincere thanks.

“ELLEN KEY.

“JONSERED, Dec. 16, 1909.”

Her own deep spirit breathes in it. It shows that the pearls in her diadem have not been dimmed by exaltation, nor their purity soiled by slanderers and false interpreters—for they are *real*.

In the foregoing biography I have pointed to the milestones on the road which Ellen Key has travelled. They showed how determining circumstances entered in at the ages of twenty, thirty, forty, and fifty in her life. She has since arrived at her sixtieth year, and then, also, did she experience something of great moment to her. She had long wished for a home of her own, but had been unable to find an appropriate site, but on her sixtieth birthday the State granted her a place in the Government park reservation, on the Omberg



Mountain slope, on the shore of Lake Wetteren, near Alvastra Cloister. It is one of the loveliest tracts of land in Sweden, and is described by a renowned journalist, in the following enthusiastic words: "The most wonderful thing about it is the view—which might well have been that much dreamed and sung-of outlook from Mignon's castle by Lago Maggiore. There is the broad water mirror framed by trees; elm, oak, and beech encompass the home." A poetic and charming description, giving us a good picture of the spot where our great Ellen Key has built her nest. Let me also give some idea of the interior of the home, and the purpose for its future. These citations are from different newspapers: "Through the centre of the house runs, in Italian style, a hallway with red brick floor. It is finished in white, with bright red doors. The same red and green wreaths which decorate her books are used for the frieze. On one wall hangs a large framed map of Sweden with the super-scription in blue and yellow letters *Vår forntids land, vår framtids land* (The land of our fathers, the land of our future). On the opposite wall hangs a similar map of Wetteren and surroundings, with the super-scription *Där livets hav oss gett en strand* (Where

life's sea has given us a strand).<sup>1</sup> And, over the door, leading out to the front, glows in red letters Goethe's reversal of the Roman death motto *Memento vivere*, (Remember to live).

Everything at Strand, from the greatest to the smallest, speaks of love,—thinking, acting, watchful love. All that nature has given has been taken advantage of in the most careful and loving way, has been preserved and perfected; all that has been made with human hands shows the inspiration of a never-failing sense of fitness. For this reason, it is pure edification to wander around, within, and without Ellen Key's home. One is everywhere struck by the many little marvels of ingenuity, and touched by the tender devotion which has not allowed a plant to be uprooted, nor a twig cut off, without due consideration. The furnishing of the house has been carefully planned in every detail, and gives many proofs of great ingenuity. One would like to have whole classes of housewives and young girls sent there, to be awakened to the high vocation of home-making. They would undoubtedly return better people, particularly if Ellen herself had preached to them the gospel of the home. In the home of her later years is found

<sup>1</sup> From Runeberg's *Vårt land*.



STRAND. THE HOME OF ELLEN KEY.



all that she has been able to save from the home of her childhood. In her bedroom, we find her little toy furniture; her mother's rather small and old-fashioned writing-desk is now used by the famous author; and, on the wall, hangs a simple little bookshelf, her first acquisition above her last, a map of Strand and its surroundings. The view from her window she has tried to have as like as possible to that of the little gable room of her girlhood, so she has planted two birches by the two springs, and a mass of ferns from her beloved Sundsholm.

One who has such a strong home feeling certainly deserves a good and beautiful home, and thousands of Ellen Key's friends rejoice with her that she has, at last, gained this, and on Swedish soil.

There is one subject which especially occupies Ellen Key's thoughts these days. And that is Strand's future. For, when she built herself a home, she did not do so principally for herself, as such a thing would simply be impossible for her. When Ellen Key built her home, and when she so intensely enjoys arranging every detail as beautifully and practically as possible, it is because, in her vision, she is building it for others. Strand

will one day be a refuge for tired, worn-out women of the labouring class. Women of the factories and city streets may here, for some weeks, enjoy sun and woods and lake, a good and beautiful home, happiness, cleanliness, and comfort. Only four may live there at a time, no more, since Strand is to be a home, not an institution. In each of the two smaller rooms, facing west, a working woman shall sleep, and the large east room shall be shared by two. Here they may listen to the lapping of Western's waves; they will wander through the great light beechwoods, both in the spring, when the anemones lie like blue and white islands under the bare branches, and, in the autumn, when the beech leaves have made a thick brown carpet over the many curving paths. They will sun themselves in the flower-wreathed loggia, and silently listen to the murmur of the springs on warm summer days.

The home will be open between May and October. The housekeeper is to have November and December as a vacation. And, during the first four months of the year, young women who want to occupy themselves with studies and literary pursuits in peace and quiet, will be received at Strand as boarders for a small charge—enough to pay expenses.

Thus, Ellen Key plans and dreams of the future of Strand. In her mind's eye, she sees the white house filled with guests from the world of tenements and noisy factories, and, with them, she enjoys the blue Wetteren, the sun, the air, the light, and the luxuriant green. And thus she is able to enjoy herself, the present in the thought of the future, her own future at Strand, and Strand's future when she is no more.

In the beginning of 1900, Ellen Key moved away from Stockholm, after having given up her work as teacher and lecturer. For years she travelled in Germany, France, Italy, years so long and many that we at home feared that she meant to desert the land of her fathers for good. Those who knew Ellen Key, however, knew that she would return, sooner or later, because, when it came to making a home, she would always remember that the home where she had been born stood on Swedish soil, that one of the blue lakes of Sweden gleamed between the Swedish elms and oaks which surrounded her beloved Sundsholm. For this reason, if for no other, Ellen Key had to find in Sweden the shore which would be her port. And she did return; and when she came back she was renowned in Europe and America.



This did not impress her much, but one good result came from her renown—the many readers of her books had made it possible for her to realise her dream of a home in the country. It is for this reason that the green oak-leaf wreath with the red ribbons which decorate her books is painted in the frieze in her hall. It is the books that have built the house, she says.

In the preface to my biographical sketch of Ellen Key, I said that my intention was simply to give a true picture of the *woman*, Ellen Key, not a study of her literary works, and that these had been mentioned only in so far as they served to interpret the personality of the author. Since then John Landquist's essay on Ellen Key has complemented my sketch, as I have already said. But as Ellen Key's spiritual development has proceeded in the same direction as my own, my personal experiences make me feel that I stand nearer to her, in certain ways, than John Landquist.

I wish to add a few words of warm gratitude because she has given us the history of her religion of life, and has communicated to us the sources of her spiritual life. To be able to assimilate the spiritual food offered in Ellen Key's *Life-Lines*, one needs calmness and the



concentration of all the forces of the soul, persevering watchfulness, and quiet patience. And the moment will come, when the horizon clears, and every thought and every word will stand illumined by the pure light which shines from out of the mist which had hidden the true understanding of her meaning. In such a moment, the soul feels itself able to rise above the woes of this world. Spiritual health exhilarates one's being. In such a moment one feels that "joy is perfection."

In *Life-Lines*, ii., I have found the richest treasures. The work, as a whole, contains the many and varied lessons which are necessary for a variety of souls. May these lessons be received in the spirit in which they are given by Ellen Key, in the enthusiasm of love as an enhancer of life and happiness. These have helped to bring me through the heavy gates which I thought had closed the road to life forever. And, therefore, I wish to bear witness to the strengthening and fortifying power of *The Religion of Life*.

Volumes ii. and iii. of *Life-Lines* appeared in 1905 and 1906, after my biography had been published.

After the preface to volume ii., Ellen Key wrote a postscript of great importance. It

contains a communication to her readers which explains her object in precluding this monumental work—called classical by some authors—with the *Course of Development of Sexual Morality. Life-Lines*, i., as well as ii. and iii., consists of two volumes each. When the first part appeared, with nine chapters devoted to the different phases of sex-life, of legal and illegal unions, with the headings: “The Evolution of Love;” “Love’s Freedom;” “Love’s Selection,” etc., the author became the object of dangerous misunderstanding. Her gospel of love was interpreted as an expression of so passionate an appreciation of erotic life that it could be considered her religion. And this, in spite of the fact that she had to her credit a large literary output, barely a twentieth part of which dealt with erotic problems, as she herself declares.

Now the truth of the matter is that *Life-Lines*, ii. as well as iii. had already been sketched before i., but the latter was published first because the relation which creates the race must be the First Article in the *Religion of Life*.

It is to be deplored that the second and third volumes were not at once translated into the languages in which the first volume had become known. In John Landquist’s essay on Ellen

Key (page 58, and following) there is a good *résumé* of the different volumes of *Life-Lines*. Ellen Key concentrates the subject-matter in the three volumes in this manner: in the preface to the third volume, Part I, the First Article of the *Religion of Life* deals with the primary cause and power of production, with the Will that creates life and struggles for existence. The Second Article of the *Religion of Life*, vol. ii., deals with living and growing together, with the Will that liberates and unites life. The Third Article of the *Religion of Life*, vol. iii., deals with the manifold complexities and the feeling of power, with life's Will enlarging the soul and creating beauty. The synthesis in the *Religion of Life* contains, in a word, Evolutionism, Solidarity, and Individualism. And, in order still further to elucidate the inner meaning of the moral law of the *Religion of Life*, she says: "The forces which are set in motion by the race-life, community-life, and the personal soul-life, ought to be used so that they may enhance life and happiness in general and for the individual, whether the latter's love, work, and faith cause his life to radiate joy or sorrow."

Since Ellen Key's monumental work, *Life-Lines*, appeared, she has written many smaller

but very significant books: *The Life of Rahel Varnhagen* in 1908, which was published in German by the Haberland Publishing Co. in Leipzig, and then in Swedish, and which had to be issued here in a second edition within a fortnight. John Landquist, in his brilliant review, points to German Romanticism as the spiritual home of Ellen Key, and says: "None of our modern writers is so satiated by the culture which blossoms around Goethe as is Ellen Key." In *Rahel Varnhagen*, Ellen Key makes us acquainted with this unique woman, and the *milieu* in which she lives. This Jewish banker's daughter, who gathered in her salon all that Berlin boasted of genius and culture, is the subject of Ellen Key's "sympathetic and living biography." Space does not allow more than passing mention of the books she has sent forth since *Life-Lines*.

In June 1909, the *Kvinnorörelsen* appeared in German, in the series *Die Gesellschaft* published by Martin Buber. According to the publisher's desire she had to confine herself to the new soul conditions, transitions, and interactions, which the *Kvinnorörelsen* had produced.

In *The Forum*, October, 1911, I read with pleasure a most excellent essay by Hanna



ELLEN KEY, 1911.

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN AT HER HOME, STRAND.



Astrup Larsen, *Ellen Key, an Apostle of Life*, giving a good account of this book which she calls the *Woman Movement*, though it had not yet been translated into English.

It is a remarkable book, a veritable treasure house for those who are interested in knowing the trend of this movement and its influence. As the author always has stood outside the struggle, she is able to give an objective report of its course. In a masterly and dispassionate manner, she sums up her own observations, and gives some illustrating examples of the views and opinions which she has held ever since youth. (For details, see *ante*, pages 106 to 113.)

Another splendid work from Ellen Key's diligent pen, like everything else she has written, bearing witness of deep insight, rich historic material, and love of the subject, is *Folkbildningsarbetet, Särskilt med hänsyn till Skönhets sinnets odling* (The Work for the Education of the People, especially with Reference to the Cultivation of the Sense of Beauty).

*Verk och Människor* (Men and Works) is a great book in which Ellen Key has gathered together essays and sketches which had previously appeared in national and foreign periodicals. There is much to learn and much

to enjoy. In the literary essays, she shows proof of delicate and poignant skill in the art of characterisation; among her reminiscences from the South, she gives a glorious description of Saint Francis of Assisi; in her essay on Rainer Maria Rilke, she gives a profound interpretation of the life consciousness of the new type of beings, and perhaps the most interesting chapters are those dealing with Maeterlinck and Verhaeren in which she gives us a glimpse of their intimate life as only a personal friend is able to do.

*Tal till Sveriges Ungdom* (Addresses to Swedish Youth) consists of a number of lectures which she has given during later years at different meetings, and before clubs. Well-considered and clear-sighted counsel, she offers the young in the struggle against all dangerous forces which life puts in their way. Even this is a valuable educational work.

Very much more might be added, but my supplement would be all too long. What is most important has been said.

Ellen Key's literary productiveness continues. If I am not mistaken, she has begun a biography of her father, which is likely to be of great value. During the glorious summer season, she breathes the air of the beautiful



country which surrounds her at her Strand. In the meantime, she gathers fresh strength for new winter work, indefatigable in her endeavour to enlighten, guide, and make happy.



## APPENDIX

### QUOTATIONS FROM PRESS UTTERANCES ABOUT ELLEN KEY ON HER SIXTIETH BIRTHDAY

THE well-known Danish critic, George Brandes, writes: “. . . Ellen Key has influenced women as no one else. . . . She has known her sex. Women have felt themselves understood by her. . . . She has widened their views, overcome their prejudices, liberated their thoughts, awakened their courage to live. She has given women self-confidence. She has instilled hope. . . . Ellen Key is a purity enthusiast. Though caring little for the external forms of morality, she yet lives and breathes the highest and purest moral atmosphere. . . . She is and remains a brave and noble priestess of high personal culture.”

Eugen Diederichs of Jena, one of Germany's foremost publishers, writes: “. . . I think of Ellen Key as a worthy counterpart of our Excellence Häckel, an Excellence Number 2, just as warm-hearted, and with the same artistic nature, just as derided, as great an optimist and liberator by her faith in the good of human beings. . . . Is not her demand for the evolution of the soul the same as the principle of culture in Humboldt's mind? . . . One fragrant warm May day,

just as the sun was setting, Ellen Key preached to us in Jena a real Sermon on the Mount. She stood on the hill and we gathered at her feet, first the youth, even to the peasants in neighbouring villages who had come to sing folk songs in honour of Ellen Key. . . . She spoke of the old spirits of Jena, of Schiller and Goethe. It was an unforgettable occasion. . . . Ellen Key with her great warm heart remains forever young. And, therefore, we feel that she belongs to us in Jena."

The gifted Belgian nature philosopher and dramatist, Maeterlinck, writes: "I unite my voice with all those of the civilised world who, to-day, hail the good, the noble, the heroic Ellen Key,—the great liberator who, in our children, will find more enlightened, more enthusiastic and trusty followers."

The French novelist, Paul Margueritte, sends the following message: "I have the deepest admiration for Ellen Key's works and the greatest respect for her person. She embodies one of the finest types of thinking and courageous humanity which makes marks in the history of ideas. I fervently unite with all those who bring her homage."

Ada Negri, the poor Italian school-teacher who is one of her country's loveliest poets, writes: "Ellen Key, radiant creature of purity and beauty! . . . I think of her as a liberator of woman's soul."

Gabriele Reuter, German author, whose novels deal with problems similar to those treated by Ellen Key, writes: "In Ellen Key has arisen one of those priestly

women who, of old, were honoured as Sibyls or Norns. In them were always found a deeper and purer knowledge of the needs and desires of the soul than in priests, kings, and warriors. . . . As to these holy, wise women of the ancient world, so those seeking help and counsel to-day may turn to Ellen Key. They will always find her ready and willing to share the flame of ideals whose caretaker she is called by the spirit to be."

Professor G. F. Steffen is one of Sweden's foremost national economists and a profound student of social conditions. He writes of Ellen Key: "It has never been difficult for me to understand and appreciate Ellen Key's life-work as the highest form of ethical striving. The logic we principally must demand of an ethical pioneer is not that of the cognitive faculty, but the logic of the will and the emotions. His first and last mission is, not intellectually to mirror what surrounds one, but from within oneself to create a new reality, the value of which consists in that it promotes the evolution of life. With the exception of Krapotkin, I have never known an ethical logician so strong in intuition, so pure in soul as Ellen Key. And, just as my love of Krapotkin is undisturbed by my objections to his scientific methods, my warm respect for Ellen Key is not the least diminished by my discernment of the weak points in her intellectual logic. Neither am I intimidated by her audacity, her good will to brave moral dangers in trying to attain a higher moral reality. All creating activity necessarily brings us into dangers . . . at the same time that it saves us from the danger of petrification. Life is

but a choice between the danger of falling into a deeper and deeper sleep or the danger of awakening to a clearer and clearer consciousness. In Ellen Key's soul there is a priceless wealth of the courage which leads us onward to meet nobler life dangers. The weak in spirit may have to be on their guard against her. But, with Ellen Key, I do not believe it is moral to regulate life by considering the desire to remain undisturbed of those that are decayed and petrified."

Vitalis Norström, professor of philosophy, one of Sweden's most profound thinkers, and the most important and worthy opponent of Ellen Key's philosophy, offers her the following tribute: "I have never doubted Ellen Key's sincerity of heart, her rich mind and her genius. Her personality radiates too much warmth and her pen sheds a too strong brilliancy to leave room for such doubt. Her great influence would also be inexplicable otherwise. In the department of popular philosophy she holds a high place of honour. But there is one thing Ellen Key has never understood: to kneel before the celestial figure of TRUTH without any side thoughts. The logical passion of truth-seeking she does not know. The joys and woes of pure thinking were never hers. It is with the HEART she fights and with the heart she suffers. But now I am, more than formerly, inclined to believe that she has in no wise fought and suffered in vain. When purging Time has passed over her works, there will remain that which will place Ellen Key among the signs foreboding the new day, the day which she herself had divined and dreamt, but which will be *far better* than her own prophetic vision."

Professor Verner Söderhielm, Finland's foremost historian of literature, expresses his opinion of Ellen Key as follows: "When I think of Ellen Key the living woman arises before my mind's eye rather than her works, the speaking rather than the writing Ellen Key. And when I read her writings I always seem to hear the sound of her voice with its inimitably tender inflection; and because her writings carry the impress of extempore discourse they have all its impulsive enthusiasm, the strong emphasis, the persuasiveness, the lack of small consideration of possible critical objections. And now when I am to pay tribute to Ellen Key on a day when the thoughts of the sixty years she has lived give us occasion to think over and sum up her work and her person, she stands for me principally as an awakener, a teacher, an inspirer, and any effort to analyse her ideas or her style of presentation of her works seems at this moment farther from me than ever.

"Ellen Key possesses certain qualities, rare in contemporary times, which seem to me to constitute her best characteristics and her greatest strength. While other spiritual labourers isolate themselves or suspiciously avoid people she is greatly attracted to them, she has a trust in human beings and a wealth of love for them which on the other hand makes it possible for her to draw and unite them like the fire on the hearth. . . . While in others the sensibility to criticism and polemics is developed to an abnormal degree, she goes forward with a courage, a frankness, and a communicativeness which radiate the joy of her own enthusiasm. While others so often doubt and hesitate she has a blind faith in the power of the indi-

vidual and of society to attain the happy life of which she dreams.

“While others grow bitter towards life, she loves it, she sees, enjoys, and learns of everything everywhere (I have observed it in many places and climes, from the northern winter to Sicily’s spring . . .) with a physical and spiritual buoyancy which is absolutely amazing. With such qualities one can remove mountains and break roads through jungles and darkness.”

From the many well-known Swedish writers and artists who paid Ellen Key honour we will quote certain excerpts.

“ . . . Ellen Key is the born citizen of the world. Her whole broad, full-blooded, all-embracing, living and thoroughly cultivated nature with its phenomenal receptivity and compassion claims the Universe for her own country, as a field of action for her boundless tenderness. She represents ‘Samhälls moderlighet’ (a phrase invented by her, meaning Social Motherliness) in its highest potency, in its broadest and most beautiful sense.”—RICKARD BERG.

“Ellen Key is dangerous, say the good citizens. Aye, and happily so. Dangerous to those who cannot understand and follow her ideal. From the fresh fountain of her pure soul there have streamed regenerating thoughts, feelings, ideas, and visions in marvellous womanly luxuriance. And when weak mortals have become intoxicated by the draught she has offered them, good citizens have cried: ‘For God’s sake, stop up the spring, drain the ground, do anything that will end this—drive the woman out of the country!’



"But Ellen Key has not let her living soul run dry, and nothing has been able to check the streams of tenderness from her over-flowing heart. This is her greatness. May we thank her!"—POUL BJERRE.

". . . The greatest quality in Ellen Key is her goodness, a goodness which allows us to forget her greatness, but which itself can never be forgotten. The warmth which radiates from a truly good person Ellen Key has and gives in richest measures. And she does not save it merely for great occasions, when she lets it stream forth and inspire listening crowds. She gives of her best to the little children gathered for a fairy tale around her evening fire, or to a group of working women to whom she gives a few hours' recreation. . . . In her striving toward great goals she never forgets to use the small opportunities of bringing help or joy to a fellow-man." EMILIE BROOMÉ.

"The remarkable thing about Ellen Key is that even critics can this day be present with good conscience among those who hail her.

"The wreath offered by the critic is perhaps not the poorest when he says: 'If you, according to my conception, have seen wrongly, you have primarily done so because you have not perceived the rarity of your own character. You have judged the earth by your own rich, good soil where no evil thrives and often you have gone on the rocks and in the sand, and gathered sunshine and warm breezes. Your path has not been easy and you have never shunned trouble. The sun has often been hidden and the winds have been cold and bitter. But you have met it all bravely

and if courage and faith could help; you would have accomplished all. But they do not suffice for everything. The human soil is heavy to prepare, the fire must burn, and the iron plough long yet before spring will come, and even then it can hardly be yours. But for yourself there is eternal spring. That is much, that is great! And as nothing great is in vain, we bow gladly to you not only in respect, but in gratitude.'"—PER HALLSTRÖM.

"*Ellen Key's ideals are not mine.* But I love her personality, and few are the persons in whose presence I have felt such a life-giving harmony in all existence, and very rare are those who with such loving understanding and compassionate mind can receive all that one gives out, as Ellen Key does. The broadly and tenderly *human* in her nature seems to me the greatest and most significant of her characteristics."

HELENA NYBLOM.

"... Ellen Key is an artist nature, ... not only in creating artistic expressions, but in a far deeper sense. She is one who divines and sees as a living reality that which lies beyond the horizon, and she has the power to make this a reality also for others who yearn. And she has the artist's ecstasy for life. She has travelled her road of life with her Master Life's genius at her side, and meekly and exaltedly listened to his words. Well may she say with the words of the apostle: 'Was not my heart burning in me when he spoke to me on the way?' Life has given her joy and woe, hot battles and great peace."

ODAL OTTELIN.

“How glorious it would be to have lived a long life and still love humanity as tenderly as does Ellen Key!”—HANNA PAULI.

“. . . The words that give the key to Ellen Key's personality are: idealism and love for humanity. These traits are so strong in her that no bitter experience has been able to disturb or diminish them. She looks away from the faults and weaknesses of the individual, she appreciates the best in each personality, she looks at one as one might have been, or may become if the noblest tendencies under favourable circumstances are allowed highest development. To understand, to beautify, and to admire is as natural for Ellen Key as to breathe. Her overestimation of human nature, her bright faith in its swift perfectibility, her conviction that what she calls the 'common virtues,' such as integrity, trustworthiness, conscientiousness, are just as natural to the majority as they are to her, form the basis of her mistakes and of others' misunderstanding of her actual meaning.”

ANNA WHITLOCK.

“A woman with so marvellous a sensitiveness to all that is young and growing and spring-like cannot but be a bright power in her land. Fighting and inspiring others to fight, notwithstanding all the gentleness of her being, she stands in our culture as a dreamer in armour.”—ANDERS ÖSTERLING.



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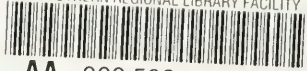
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