

## THE DANCING SEAL

WILFRID WILSON GIBSON

**W**HEN we were building Skua Light—  
The first men who had lived a night  
Upon that deep-sea isle—

As soon as chisel touched the stone,  
The friendly seals would come ashore;  
And sit and watch us all the while,  
As though they'd not seen men before;  
And so, poor beasts, had never known  
Men had the heart to do them harm.  
They'd little cause to feel alarm  
With us, for we were glad to find  
Some friendliness in that strange sea;  
Only too pleased to let them be,  
And sit as long as they'd a mind  
To watch us: for their eyes were kind  
Like women's eyes, it seemed to me.

So, hour on hour, they sat: I think  
They liked to hear the chisels' clink:  
And when the boy sang loud and clear,  
They scrambled closer in to hear;  
And if he whistled sweet and shrill,  
The queer beasts shuffled nearer still:  
And every sleek and sheeny skin  
Was mad to hear his violin.

When, work all over for the day,  
He'd take his fiddle down and play  
His merry tunes beside the sea,  
Their eyes grew brighter and more bright,  
And burned and twinkled merrily:  
And as I watched them one still night,  
And saw those eager sparkling eyes,  
I felt those lively seals would rise

Some shiny night ere he could know,  
And dance about him, heel and toe,  
Unto the fiddle's heady tune.

And at the rising of the moon,  
Half-daft, I took my stand before  
A young seal lying on the shore,  
And called on her to dance with me.  
And it seemed hardly strange when she  
Stood up before me suddenly,  
And shed her black and sheeny skin;  
And smiled, all eager to begin . . .  
And I was dancing, heel and toe,  
With a young maiden, white as snow,  
Unto a crazy violin.

We danced beneath the dancing moon  
All night beside the dancing sea,  
With tripping toes and skipping heels:  
And, all about us, friendly seals  
Like Christian folk were dancing reels  
Unto the fiddle's endless tune  
That kept on spinning merrily  
As though it never meant to stop.  
And never once the snow-white maid  
A moment stayed  
To take a breath,  
Though I was fit to drop:  
And while those wild eyes challenged me,  
I knew as well as well could be  
I must keep step with that young girl,  
Though we should dance to death.

Then with a skirl  
The fiddle broke:  
The moon went out:  
The sea stopped dead:  
And, in a twinkling, all the rout

Of dancing folk had fled . . .  
And in the chill bleak dawn I woke  
Upon the naked rock, alone.

They've brought me far from Skua Isle . . .  
I laugh to think they do not know  
That as, all day, I chip the stone,  
Among my fellows here inland,  
I smell the sea-wrack on the shore . . .  
And see her snowy-tossing hand,  
And meet again her merry smile . . .  
And dream I'm dancing all the while,  
I'm dancing ever, heel and toe,  
With a seal-maiden, white as snow,  
On that moonshiny Island-strand,  
For ever and for evermore.

# THE SCHOOL AND THE FEMININE IDEAL \*

ANNA GARLIN SPENCER

## II

**M**ORE and more, as we are working out a consistent theory of education in general for boys and girls and for youth of both sexes, a sure instinct is enriching the curriculum of colleges and universities in which women are students by the insertion of courses which are intended to fit them both for the position of woman-head of a family of social leadership, and for those professional careers which lie nearest the home life. Books are being compiled to show how educated women may fit themselves for other employments than teaching, and the courses in household science and economy are now made to cover a wide range of vocational training for many important professions. Perhaps the most important sign of the times in this direction is the recent action of the Association of Collegiate Alumnae commending this enlargement of the college curriculum.

In regard both to the vocational training of girls which must follow immediately upon graduation from the elementary school, and that which can be obtained through the high school and college, certain main points of guidance may be noted. If women as a sex are generally to be confronted with a vocational divide at marriage, then it stands to reason and common sense that they will choose, and their parents for them (where no special talent is indicated), such training as will serve best for both personal self-support and family usefulness: that is to say, the trades needing shortest preparation for wage-earning, and the professions most nearly allied to general culture, will be the most popular in the educational choices for girls. This is understood in the case of the girl who must begin wage-earning early in so far as it relates to preparation for factory and shop work in the occupations nearest in locality to her home and demanding least time for acquiring technique.

We have not yet reached the point where any well-considered

\* Commenced in the May number.