

**THE VIEW
VERTICAL; AND
OTHER ESSAYS**

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The View Vertical; And Other Essays by Winifred Kirkland

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WINIFRED KIRKLAND

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BY

WINIFRED KIRKLAND

Author of "The Joys of Being a Woman," etc.



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**THE VIEW VERTICAL
AND OTHER ESSAYS**

THE VIEW VERTICAL

THE chief result of the war is that it has left everybody's nerves jumpy. Nations and individuals give too much evidence that they have been lying awake at night, listening to burglars stealthily trying the cellar windows. Our jangled nerves seem unable to respond to the simple fact that for some time now our jewel cases and our watches and our dining silver have been obstinately reappearing each morning in familiar security. Despite this reassuring circumstance, sleeplessness dominates the intercourse of mind with mind, which, whether expressed in art or literature, in newsprint or conversation, is made up of wan-eyed recountings of the new things each of us has found to be afraid of the night before. At a time when a holocaust has left the nerves of humanity raw and quivering, it is well we should stoutly take ourselves in hand to conquer a universal neurasthenia.

The best nerve treatment seems to be to convince the patient of what is the matter with him, and then to trust to his own common sense to restore his equilibrium. A little examination into the nature of all sleepless-

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ness may suggest a wider application of its cure, and a readier caution in accepting as reliable any verdicts reached in the night-watches.

It is strange that we choose night-time to solve all the puzzles of the cosmos, that sturdy old cosmos which by day we are inclined to leave to its own doing or undoing. How many solutions reached at 3 A.M. have ever proved valid upon arising? What more worthless than the conclusions of an insomniac? Who knows this fact so well as the insomniac himself? The truth is, we are so helplessly irrational in the small hours that it even appears rational to lie awake. At night we are mastered by the fallacy that we are doing useful thinking, a fallacy immediately recognized when in the morning we resume the vertical. Why do we not oftener summon some of our daylight reason to counteract the unreason of the night? The newer psychological methods seek by argument to prove to the subconscious self the futility of insomnia in the hope that this obdurate subconscious self may thus at last be sufficiently convinced to grant us slumber.

It is the horizontal attitude of the body combined with enveloping darkness that is the natural condition of physical impotence and of mental obscurity. For their power over us