

Mitchell's views about the care of his female patients (some of which are included elsewhere in this volume) were well known. He prescribed extended bed rest, isolation from family, overfeeding, and massage—all of which tend to transform an adult woman into a dependent infant. After a month of infantilization, Gilman was “cured” and sent home to a regimen that stressed domestic life, permitted “but two hours’ intellectual life a day,” and prohibited painting and writing. Adhering to these prohibitions almost drove Gilman insane, and her autobiography contains details about creating a rag baby and retreating both literally and emotionally to closets in order to escape from her distress. By November 1887 she decided to “cast off Dr. Mitchell bodily, and do exactly what I pleased.” This decision seemed to coincide with resolving her marital dilemma, for in September 1888, she went to Pasadena with Katharine, leaving her husband behind.