

§ 1. At the beginning of the 20th century mothering was thought to be an uncomplicated business. Working-class mothers knew their job: to feed, clothe, house their children and teach them to behave. The middle and upper classes paid some attention to childrearing fashions, but the task of motherhood was largely delegated to a nanny or a nursemaid or both. Mothers convinced themselves that nanny would do a better job as she would be less emotionally involved. "Nanny was my life. She was my authority," explained Mary Lutyens. "Mother was a goddess. It was unthinkable that a goddess should bath me."

§ 2. Mary was brought up by her much loved nanny, Louisa Seath. The children's world revolved around the nursery, tucked away on the top floor far from their parents. As a child, Mary was much closer to Nanny Seath than to her mother. Mary couldn't have borne the shame if her mother had seen her without clothes and when at fifteen, she was sick in front of her, she was "terribly ashamed" and amazed that her mother could hold her head without appearing to be disgusted. Nanny had always been the one who comforted her and nursed her when she was ill. The best nannies compensated for a mother's **shortcomings**, provided an extra shoulder to cry on and gave the mother freedom to develop interests beyond her family circle. Although Mary's memory of her mother is far from the fairytale aproned and rosy-cheeked provider of meals, she worshipped her all the same. Mrs Lutyens **inspired** her children with her own love of literature and as they grew older they became closer. On the other hand, Helena Wright, the eminent gynaecologist, remained bitterly cynical of her mother who had been more bound up in her social life and charitable works than in her children. "To me you were merely a shadow, she writes to her mother, "a shadow with three characteristics: you were always 'busy' and you were either ill or worried. Nurse Minter was our chief companion... Why didn't you get to know your children a little?"

§ 3. In working-class families there was no such division of labour: children were left entirely to mother. In the early years of the 20th century, there was no talk of stimulating play or entertaining or amusing children. Children were left to their own devices and by the age of six or seven were expected to look after themselves and, when not at school, run errands (*быть на посылках*) for the family. Ideally, they kept out of the way, bothering grown-ups as little as possible.

Определите значение указанного слова в тексте.

shortcomings (§ 2)

- 1) brief visits 2) drawbacks 3) absence