

## ONLY A GIRL

**M**Y GRADES IN SCHOOL were only average whereas my brother was exceptionally bright. He skipped the third and sixth grades and completed high school in three years, after which he was admitted to Harvard. One day when I was in the fifth grade mother and I were out walking when we met my teacher. She said to mother, “Dorrit isn’t nearly as bright as her brother, is she?” That did not hurt me as I worshiped my brother, thinking nobody else could be as bright as he. On the other hand, mother’s reply did hurt. She said “What can you expect? She’s only a girl!” (Later I could not accept my mother’s opinion when I noticed that more girls than boys seemed to become valedictorians in high school.) As a child I often pondered as to why I was scholastically less talented. Mother had considered me, when I was a small child, to be brighter than I later turned out to be. One of my earliest memories is of playing tenpins with a neighboring child when she said “They are not tenpins; they are Indian clubs” and demonstrated her point by whacking me on the head with one of them. I had strength enough to run into the house and remember collapsing at my mother’s feet, but have not the vaguest recollection of what followed. While still a child I often wondered whether that accident was the reason I was less talented than my beloved brother.