

THE LEGAL WRONGS OF WOMEN.*

MANY wrongs and evils that have long existed in society, continue to exist simply because mankind are accustomed to them. That law of our nature which makes us tolerant of what is habitual, like every other that regulates our being, has its peculiar and valuable uses, at the same time that it is liable to great abuse. There are inevitable evils in life which it helps us to bear with fortitude; there are disagreeable necessities to which it helps us to submit with patience; there are perpetually recurring duties of a repulsive, wearisome, or uninteresting nature, which it helps us to fulfil with cheerfulness. Did we not become in some sort accustomed to the vacant corner at our fire-side, and the empty seat at our table, once filled by a dear object whose place here shall know him no more, his loss would for ever deprive us of our peace. Were it not that the invalid, by habitual endurance, becomes so accustomed to his privations as to be in some degree insensible to them, his condition would be intolerable. In the case of the largest proportion of mankind who are doomed to incessant toil in order to procure a bare subsistence, going their daily rounds like a horse in a mill, for provender, shelter, and a blanket, what but habit so reconciles them to their condition, that they are willing to accept existence upon these terms, and retain their love of life to the end? As great a number, perhaps, although not doomed to incessant toil, nevertheless fill subordinate places which admit little variety or excitement, and are better satisfied with their lot, than others, whose condition, in many respects better, is less regulated by fixed habits.

In like manner, nations become accustomed to a prevalent mode of government, be it ever so unjust and oppressive, to a prevalent form of religion, be it ever so corrupt, and to existing institutions of every sort however

unfavorable to human welfare and progress. It is, therefore, only at long intervals when some master-spirit, some watchman of a century, seeing the people beset with snares and surrounded with dangers, calls upon them to awake, to rouse from their slumbers, shake off their fetters, burst their prison doors, and battle like men for the right, that they recognize themselves as men, men of full stature and strength, and assert their prerogatives accordingly.

If it is well that man has something so passive in his nature to prevent restlessness and the great and violent changes that would ensue therefrom, it would be well, also, that he should be on his guard against the moral and intellectual inactivity to which, if unresisted, it inevitably leads.

The present is a period of change. The present age may be well distinguished from all its predecessors and characterized as the *era of change*. While the application of man's knowledge and skill in the arts and sciences, is affecting greatly his commercial and social relations and his physical condition, there is a busy, questioning spirit abroad, that would fain produce a corresponding change in the moral world, by raising that which is low, pulling down that which is too high, and making straight that which is crooked. In our own country, particularly, to use an expression borrowed from religious phraseology, there is "a great awakening;" not produced by artificial means, but by deep and strong pulsations in the heart of the community. Like other slumberers the people have been roused by visions betokening reality, that they saw, when a deep sleep had fallen upon them. Americans have their eyes open, at last, to the fact, that the promise of their free and equal institutions is kept in many cases only to the ear while it is broken to the hope; that there are evils existing in our midst, which

* The present Article on its own face avows itself as the production of a female pen; but we will not let the occasion pass without adding to it a more emphatic expression of our full approval and adoption of its views, than would be contained in its mere insertion in our pages without note or comment.—Ed. D. R.