



## THE POWERS OF WOMEN, AND HOW TO USE THEM.

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THERE has been, perhaps, a greater change of opinion in England on a greater variety of subjects—social, political, and religious—during the last ten years than had taken place in the whole period which had elapsed since Europe was convulsed by the Reformation. Whether the change has been for the better or the worse will be, of course, estimated differently by different minds, but the fact itself will hardly be disputed.

Ten years ago household suffrage was considered an impossible tenet belonging to the ultra-Radicals; we have lived to see it given by a Conservative Government. The abolition of the Irish State Church was the scheme of “philosophical levellers;” it has become the popular cry on which a party rides into power. “Essays and Reviews” was petitioned against as fraught with horrible novelties of heresy; the book may be said to have died in bringing forth a bishop, but scarcely a weekly paper or a monthly magazine now appears which does not contain doctrines almost as “advanced.”

The revolution has been more tranquil and peaceful than any former one. The Bishop of Peterborough did not offer to go to the stake in defence of the Irish Establishment; Lord Derby swallowed the bitter draught of the suffrage instead of laying down his head like Strafford on the scaffold. Liberal admissions take out the sting of the strongest defences of orthodoxy; and the revision of the authorized version, headed by the Bishop of Winchester, looks a little like the

theological equivalent of Mr. Disraeli taking the political bread out of the mouths of his adversaries by the "ten minutes" Bill. Lastly, the whole question of the use of women in the world, their "rights" and their "wrongs," is being discussed in a manner which contrasts very remarkably with the tone of even a few years back; while the discussions in Parliament upon female suffrage, the municipal vote granted last year to single women possessing the necessary qualification, the Married Women's Property Bill, which has just passed the House of Commons, the education—artistic, medical, scientific, and literary—now offered to them by so many bodies, public and private, show the breach which has been made in the fortress of ancient opinion.

The movement has now indeed attained a wider, deeper significance than is even indicated by such changes in England. It is spreading over the whole world in the marvellously rapid way with which the interchange of ideas takes place at present among nations; through that "solidarity" which is at last comprehending even the unchanging East. It is showing itself in Russia and Spain, in India and America, the old world and the new alike. Russian ladies are taking medical degrees at Zurich, and now at St. Petersburg; schools for Hindoo girls are established and well attended at Madras and Calcutta. Monseigneur Dupanloup protests against the lowering effect of the poor education given to girls in France, and the Roman Catholic bishop is as urgent in his demand for a higher ideal of woman's life as our English radical philosopher.

But though both extremes of opinion agree as to the evil of the present state of things, though the *Saturday Review* is as strenuous in its description of the vacuity of the lives and occupations of thousands of women as the most strong-minded of the lady writers, there is the greatest possible divergence as to the remedy and the means of applying it. Give them the same education as men, says one side; but we are at this very moment revolutionising the instruction in our boys' schools, and declaring the subjects to be often ill-taught, and not always worth learning. Shut them up with governesses and in school-rooms more strictly, says the other; but it is the girls who are the result of this very training of whom we are now complaining.

Meantime two or three hard facts have come out in the discussions on the subject. The census of 1851 showed three millions and a half of women working for a subsistence, of these two millions and a half were unmarried. At the census of 1861 the number of self-supporting\*

\* The wretched gulf below into which so many of these are driven by misery, the wholesale destruction of soul and body which takes place, cannot here be entered on, and indeed this class is not included in these numbers.

women had increased by more than half a million, many with relations dependent upon them. The pretty, pleasant, poetic view of life by which man goes forth to labour for his wife, while her duty is to make his home comfortable, is clearly not possible for this large portion of womankind, since, although a certain number of them are single because they preferred celibacy to any choice offered to them, a very large proportion are so from necessity, and certainly find the burden of maintaining themselves a heavy one.

That the "highest result" of life both for men and women is a really happy marriage there can be no doubt; where each is improved by the other, and every good work is helped, not hindered, for both. It is an ideal which has existed, though it may not have been carried out, from very early times—and it is somewhat discouraging that, as Mr. Lecky has shown, some of the most beautiful pictures of the relation, and indeed of womanhood at large, are to be found in Homer and the Greek tragedians; "the conjugal tenderness of Hector and Andromache, the unwearied fidelity of Penelope, whose storm-tossed husband looked forward to her as to the crown of all his labours, the heroic love of Alcestis voluntarily dying that her husband might live," and many more such. Later in history, though Aristotle gives a touching account of a good wife, and Plutarch declares her to be "no mere housekeeper, but the equal and companion of her husband," we must go on to Rome for an equally high type of a wife. "The Roman matron was from the earliest times a name of honour," and a juriconsult of the empire defined marriage as "a lifelong fellowship of all divine and human rights." Indeed, "the position of wives during the empire was one of a freedom and dignity which they have never since altogether regained."

That modern society has not always shown an advance on these questions may be seen in Mr. Maine's observation that the canon law, which nearly everywhere prevailed on the position of women, has on several points "deeply injured civilization."

Mr. Mill's description of the relation seems drawn from his own experience:—

"What marriage may be in the case of two persons of cultivated minds, identical in opinions and purposes, between whom there exists the best kind of equality" (not that of powers, but of different capacities), "with each their respective superiority, so that each can have alternately the pleasure of leading and being led in the path of development . . . where the two care for great objects in which they can help and encourage each other, so that the minor matters on which their tastes differ are not all-important, . . . here is a connection of friendship of the most enduring character, making it a greater pleasure to each to give pleasure to the other than to receive it. . . . This is no dream of an enthusiast, but a social rela-

tion on whose general realization will depend the best development of our race."

To enable women to fulfil their share of this union it will be granted must require far more cultivation than they now generally attain. For the very large portion who cannot obtain this "highest result," and who yet have the misfortune to require food and clothing, which they must earn for themselves or starve, it is surely not too much to ask that they be furnished ungrudgingly with all possible means of fitting themselves to perform well whatever work society will permit them to carry out.

As to what is "unnatural" work, opinion varies so much in different ages and countries, that we are hardly yet entitled to dogmatise. "Nature," Mr. Mill thinks, "may be safely left to take care of itself, and that in any work for which women are really incompetent they will drop out of the race;" but he hardly seems to allow for the extraordinary plasticity with which women adapt themselves to the ideal required of them by public opinion. Among the North American Indians all the heavy labour—the carrying of burdens, &c.—falls to their share without any feeling of hardship, the duty of the "braves" being only to fight. In many parts of Germany the division is the same; the peasant woman digs, ploughs, manages the cattle, carries the fuel and the hay from the mountains, while the men are either with the army, or sitting smoking and drinking in the little "platz" of the village. In Scotland the stalwart fishwives would be horrified at their husbands doing anything but manage the sea share of the business; they have their boats and nets to look after, and have nothing whatever to do with matters on shore, where the woman reigns paramount.

An extremely curious instance of what habit and opinion can make of women appeared not long ago in that very unromantic source of information, a British Blue-Book. In the account of a mission sent by England in 1863 to induce the King of Dahomey to give up the slave trade, the envoy, Commodore Wilmot, remarks incidentally:—

"The Amazons are everything in this country. There are nearly 5,000 of them in the king's army;" and he adds, "there can be no doubt that they are the mainstay of the kingdom. They are a very fine body of women, remarkably well-limbed and strong, armed with muskets, swords, gigantic razors for cutting off heads, bows and arrows, blunderbusses, &c.; their large war-drum was conspicuous, hung round with skulls.

"They are first in honour and importance, all messages are carried by them to and from the king and his chiefs. They are only found about the royal palaces, form the body-guard of the sovereign, and no one else is allowed to approach them. At the reception of the embassy the king ordered them to go through a variety of movements and to salute me, which they did most creditably; they loaded and fired with remarkable rapidity, singing songs all the time. . . . They marched better than the men, and

looked far more warlike in every way ; their activity is astonishing—they would run with some of our best performers in England. On one occasion the king appeared in a carriage drawn by his body-guard of women. As soldiers in an African kingdom and engaged solely in African warfare, they are very formidable enemies, and fully understand the use of their weapons."

Besides 5,000 of these under arms, there are numerous women to attend on them as servants, cooks, &c. Their numbers are kept up by young girls of thirteen or fourteen, attached to each company, who learn their duties, dance, sing, and live with them, but do not go to war till they are considered old enough to handle a musket. They are fully aware of the authority they possess—their manner is bold and free ; but in spite of a certain swagger in their walk, he speaks particularly of "their good manners and modest behaviour ; most of them are young, well-looking, and without any ferocity in their expression, though an occasional skull or jaw-bone may be seen dangling at their waist-belts. They are supposed to live a life of chastity, and there is no doubt that they do so, as it would be impossible for them to do wrong without being found out, and such discovery would lead to instant death." "The only menial service they perform is to fetch water (which is extremely scarce) for the use of the king and his household, and morning and evening long strings of them may be seen with water jars on their heads silently and quietly wending their way to the wells in single file, the front one with a bell round her neck, which she strikes when any men are seen ; these immediately run off to leave the road clear, and must wait till the file has passed, for if an accident happened to the woman or her jar, any man near would be considered responsible, and either imprisoned for life or his head cut off. Business is stopped, and everybody delayed to their great inconvenience, by this absurd law." The Amazons enjoy their consequence, and laughed heartily when they saw the commodore obliged to step aside in order to avoid them.

It was mentioned by Bishop Crowther, in a lecture at Torquay, that in war, fewer prisoners by far are made among them than among the men soldiers ; they fight more fiercely, with more determination, and would rather die than yield. "Indeed," says Wilmot, "they are far superior to the men in everything—in appearance, in dress, in figure, in activity, in their performance as soldiers, and in bravery." It is curious to see the old Greek legends, which we have so long disbelieved, thus fully borne out.

The evidence is the more interesting as it appears merely as part of the report of the embassy, "presented to both Houses of Parliament by command of her Majesty," with no object of proving anything to anybody in the matter.

Here is a whole body of women distinguished for the very qualities we should be most inclined to refuse them, the produce of a "well-directed" education to the end required.

It is difficult at present to make any sweeping assertions as to what women can or cannot do, as even if we decide categorically for England, we shall find the standard of their ability vary by merely crossing the Channel in France; and if such a discussion had been possible in India, and a Hindoo Mr. Mill had expressed hopeful views of their powers and of what might be expected from them under a different *régime*, the weekly papers of Benares would certainly have replied that the nature of women was tolerably well known since the beginning of the world; that they had had time enough in all conscience to give proof that their powers were but little above those of animals; that they could not be trusted out of the zenana to take care even of themselves; that it was doubtful whether they had any souls at all, and, at all events, certain to the orthodox, that their only chance of immortality was by burning themselves on the funeral pile of their husbands. Yet even with public feeling so strongly against them, "the best native Indian governments are those directed by women," says Mr. Mill, borne out by Sir Richard Temple and many other authorities.

Seven-eighths of the world is Pagan, Mahometan, or Buddhist, where the lowest opinion concerning women still prevails; and even in Christian countries the education given to them is so much for show, so little for use, so empty of real knowledge, that we have hardly yet the materials on which to found our judgment as to their powers, unless exceptionally.

That these will turn out to be the same as those of men is, to say the very least, most improbable; that God should have created two sets of beings, so different physically and outwardly, if he had intended one to be merely the repetition of the other, and unless they had been fitted to perform different functions in the world's great work. Such a variety of gifts is required to accomplish what is wanted around us, that it will be strange if we cannot arrive at a certain joint co-operative action between men and women which shall be better than that of either alone. "Two are better than one," as Solomon says, and even than one and one. There is a male and female side to all great work which will not be thoroughly carried out unless both can labour at it heartily together. The silent share contributed by women in man's work,—to take only a few of the instances found in late biographies, the assistance given by the sister of Mendelssohn in the composition of the "Lieder ohne Worte," by old Miss Herschel in her brother's calculations, by Mrs.

Austen and Lady Hamilton\* in the production of their husbands' works on jurisprudence and metaphysics, and that which is told by M. Renan and Mr. Mill in their touching tributes, the first to his sister, the other to his wife,—is only known from magnanimous men, rich enough in ideas not to grudge such acknowledgments. "On ne prête qu'aux riches," says a French proverb. But how this joint work for the world can best be generally carried out remains still to be settled. To take, however, one instance: the administrative power with which Mr. Mill credits woman enables her to assist most efficiently conjointly with men in the management of philanthropic establishments—hospitals, reformatories, asylums, workhouses, &c., where she is found to give more comfort more economically than men, to spend less with greater results. She has generally more intuitive insight into character, and is less liable to be taken in (provided her affections are not concerned). She is both more considerate and considering, more observant of small indications than a man, and draws her conclusions more carefully, and carries out her kind intentions with more thought. "And Mary pondered all these things in her heart," is a very true picture of her sex. She is a particularly efficient teacher of male pupils, says one good educational authority; there is a certain rude chivalry among boys when they know that they cannot be compelled to do a thing by force, which will often make them yield. For example, a class of unruly lads in a ragged school, utterly unamenable to the discipline of a man, has been known to obey a young woman; as a difficult-tempered horse is sometimes most easily guided by a female hand, when it is at the same time both skilful and light.

There was one remarkable instance of such influence in the late American war. After the arrival of the lady nurses in the different field hospitals of the northern army, the degraded attendance which ordinarily follows a camp gradually melted away. The husbands, brothers, and relations of the women who had given up the protection of their homes for the sake of the wounded did not choose that their belongings should be exposed to such scenes, and the baser element almost entirely disappeared, at least from sight.

One of the most curious "changes of front" in public opinion which has taken place, is concerning the care of the sick. Surgery and medicine seem to have been regarded as peculiarly feminine occupations in the Middle Ages. Even queens and princesses were regularly instructed in the "healing arts." To be a good leech was as important in a complete education then as to play on the piano nowadays, and was certainly not less useful.

\* The *Edinburgh Review* says:—"We are, in truth, indebted to these two ladies that the most profound and abstruse discussions of law and metaphysics which have appeared in our time became accessible and intelligible to the public."

That there are certain branches of the profession adapted for women most people will now admit—*i.e.*, midwifery and the diseases of women and children; we may indeed come to regard this part of the craft as one into which men have intruded themselves instead of the contrary cry. But it is clear that women physicians neither can nor ought to be consulted or trusted who have not undergone the most thorough training and submitted to the most searching examination. The difficulties which must result from a course of joint study for men and women together are such in the present state of things as to render it most undesirable; but in France, the question is solved by a separate training, which there for sixty-nine years has given as perfect an education to midwives, both practical and scientific, as well can be. It includes a course of instruction in a hospital of two hundred beds, where none but women pupils are received. A first-class certificate is not given under two years, a second-class not under one, and without a certificate no one can practise in France. The lady professors of this institution are physician accoucheurs, not merely midwives, and hold a rank, both scientific and practical, quite equal to our first-class "ladies' doctors" here. No classes or lectures such as are often proposed in England, could possibly afford the requisite training, unless accompanied by the practical work on the patients themselves such as is thus afforded in France. In the same way no certificates or examinations in nursing could be of any avail unless they are the result and the evidence of trained work in a hospital, to be judged of not by a board theoretically, but by the training surgeons and nurses.

Many foreign universities, however, Zurich, Stockholm, &c., have shown no jealousy of women doctors, but will now admit any woman who can pass their examination for a medical degree.

With regard to other special training, the greater facilities given in the classes at the Royal Academy, the female schools of design at South Kensington and elsewhere, the Academy of Music, &c., will now enable women to obtain the thorough knowledge necessary for good work in art. It is to be hoped that some proof of efficiency may soon be exacted for governesses and schoolmistresses: a diploma such as is required to be shown by them in Germany, France, and Switzerland, will be a natural result, indeed, of the examinations now offered by Cambridge, London, Dublin, Edinburgh, and, lastly, Oxford. The class of female teachers will thus be raised both in position and salary. In America, at this moment, they stand very high in the scale, and are even entrusted with a great share of the conduct of large boys' schools.

But it is for those women who do not intend to be either doctors, or artists, or schoolmistresses, that our improved education is most wanted. As it is, in the very fields which are considered to belong



to women by the most niggardly estimate of their powers, they are totally without training of any kind, and each individual is forced to make out the very A B C of useful knowledge for herself.

For instance, in the conduct of their houses and the management of their children, which the staunchest Conservative would declare to be their peculiar province, what pains is taken to give them even the most elementary knowledge of the things likely to be most useful to them? What woman has learnt how to prevent the frost from bursting the water-pipes, which flood half the houses in London unnecessarily every winter? or what has caused the cracking of the boiler, and how it may be avoided? or the facts concerning food, that proportion which is best for each different stage of life, and how to make the best of it? "I'm sure it was the bread was very nice last time; I can't think why it isn't so this while," says even a clever cook. The rule of thumb is universal, and the mistress cannot correct it.

Again, with regard to the health of the children and household, the frightful ignorance of mothers, both rich and poor, annually sacrifices the lives, and, what is really worse, the health, of thousands of human beings. It is a common saying that the first child is generally a victim to the experimental efforts of the poor mother, who, having never learnt what is good either for herself or her offspring, can only guide herself after having been taught by the bitter knowledge of experience.

Women will be found "sending for the doctor" for the slightest ailment, either of their own or of their children, which the commonest sense and the most easy acquaintance with hygiene ought to enable them to cope with; yet "laudamy and calomy" are the "simples" they have not scrupled to use. Every girl ought to go through a course of training as to what is required in all ordinary cases of emergency—how to bind up a cut, to put out fire, to treat a burn, the bad effect of air on a wound, its necessity to the lungs, the measures necessary to guard against infection—"common things," as they are called, but uncommonly little known at the present day. Questions of fresh air are beginning to be a little better understood; yet still, passing along the crowded streets of London, and looking up at most of the nursery windows, rows of little pale faces may be seen peering through the closed casements, "for fear they should catch cold," which is often the only form of care conceived of, and is carried out by making them as liable to cold as possible. A great medical authority declares that the children of the lowest and artisan class in London are healthier than those of the class above them, because they are allowed to play in the gutter, which cannot be permitted to "genteel" children, and the fresh air compensates for inferior living and much want of care. How much of the disease

and ill-temper of our children, and consequently of our own, is owing to ignorance in their keepers, which might be prevented by the better education of nursemaids (no very Utopian notion), it is grievous to think of.

Again, with regard to education, there is a peculiar appetite in a healthy-minded child, evidently placed there by nature, for observing the facts around it, and seeking for their interpretation—"why?" "what?" "where?" is the substance of the talk of intelligent children. Questions as to the reasons of everything, as to the birds, beasts, flowers, and stones they meet with. Instead, however, of satisfying this curiosity, we give them names, the hardest husks of knowledge, "Mangnall's Questions," and "Pinnock's Catechisms," the very dearest dry bones of information. As a general rule let what it can see, and touch, and taste, and smell, and the explanation thereof, come before things which its limited experience does not enable it to realise, and therefore take interest in, and which are generally to it mere words, such as history, geography, grammar. The abstract comes later in life. There can be no doubt that such instruction comes within a woman's province; let her, at least, learn how best it may be accomplished.

There are many questions still remaining to be solved as to how body and soul react on each other, which women are peculiarly fitted to assist in settling;—for instance, although asceticism and epicureanism are alike mistaken rules of life, how yet the good which exists undoubtedly in both is to be secured in education; how to give the mind the fairest play; to "have the body under subjection," in one sense—to make it the slave, and not the master, in the joint concern,—yet so to cultivate it as to render it the healthy organ, or interpreter to execute the intentions of the mind, and how neither mind nor body can do its best without a proper balance being attained. Education having gone too much in the cramming direction, the pendulum seems likely now to sway too far on the opposite side for men—athletics, for their own sake, (although the sitting still *regimen* is still required for women); while the wisest among the Greeks seem to have aimed at the perfection of outward form, chiefly as the instrument of the inward powers of man.

Again, the field of philanthropy has never been contested to woman: let her be taught to fulfil it wisely. Men have such respect apparently for her power of intuition that they seem to think she can do as well without as with study. The excellent women who undertake to assist the poor, probably at this moment are doing at least as much harm as good, demoralising them by teaching dependence, and diminishing their power of self-reliance; they are utterly ignorant in general of political economy, in its best sense; of the laws of

supply and demand; of that which constitutes real help, *i.e.*, that which rouses man to help himself; while their religious teaching too often resolves itself into proselytism and dissemination of doctrinal tracts. These are studies without which charity degenerates into the pouring of water into baskets, whereas in France the administration of the Poor Law, the *bureau de bienfaisance*, is committed by Government to the care of the Sisters of Charity, who are considered as the fittest instruments for the work.

With regard to comparatively smaller matters, such as art, there can be no doubt that if woman's knowledge of what really constitutes beauty were more cultivated, if her taste were higher, or, indeed, anything but the merest accident of feeling, our hideous upholstery, our abominable millinery-portraits, the vulgar or vapid colouring of our drawing-rooms, would improve. "Natural selection" would get rid of the monstrosities in our shops by the simple process of the bad not finding purchasers, as much as by any schools of design.

Again, with regard to dress, wider interests would probably indirectly tend to cure the extravagance which constant change of fashion produces. For a woman to take care that her outward clothing makes her as pleasing as circumstances comport, is a real duty to her neighbours; but this is not at all the aim of fashion. There is nothing which puzzles the male mind, and especially the artist mind, like its mystery—why every woman, short and tall, fat and thin, must wear exactly the same clothes; why their heads must all bud out in an enormous chignon one year, and their bodies expand into an immense bell in the next, under pain of being unpleasantly remarkable, by the edict of some irresponsible *Vehmgericht* which rules over us. The tyranny of opinion is such that no woman dreams of resisting beyond a certain point; she has been taught that to be singular is in her almost a crime, and she accordingly undresses her poor old shoulders, or swells out her short body, and is intolerably ugly and unpleasant to look at to her male relations, but is satisfied with the internal conviction of right given by the feeling that at least she is in the fashion! More knowledge of real art would show her that if certain lines are really becoming, their opposites cannot be so too; that there is a real science of the beautiful, to contravene which is as painful to the instructed eye as notes out of tune in music to the instructed ear.

The power wielded by woman is at present so enormous, that if men at all realized its extent, they would for their own purposes insist on her being better qualified to use it. If any man will candidly confess to himself the amount of influence on his habits of thought and feeling throughout his life, first of his mother and sisters, of young ladyhood in general, and

later of his wife, daughters, and female friends, the opinions modified, the incentives supplied by women, old and young, he will be almost appalled by the thought of the manner in which this potent being has been left to pick up what education she could from an ignorant governess or an indifferent school; while her ideas of right and wrong, her religion and morality, have generally been obtained by being carefully kept from hearing that there is another side to any question. The important and the trivial are generally strangely mixed up in her mind: traditional rules—such as that though it is wicked to read history on Sundays, you may make riddles out of the Bible; that you may cut paper for patchwork on the Sabbath, but if you sew it is a sin—being not seldom considered almost as binding as the Gospel itself.

A custom becomes in such a woman's eyes as sacred as morality; the inextricable confusion of the form with its meaning, which is so common, and which makes it so dangerous to touch or improve a symbol lest we damage the thing symbolized, may be greatly traced to the unreasoning traditional mode in which women, half the human race, regard everything. The sentimental part of their minds being stronger, their power of association more vivid than that of men, anything connected, however remotely, with their affections, is clung to more warmly, and makes it more difficult for them to part with the external shape which a thought has been in the habit of taking in their eyes.

Accordingly, even in matters of politics, which have been supposed to be out of their line, "the party of the roses and nightingales," as Mr. Grant Duff once euphuistically called it, has been a power in the State, a very sensible influence, which has often checked, and even prevented, useful reforms.

To give her the "responsibility of her opinions" might be a cure for this, but the question of the suffrage cannot be looked upon as an important one. During the past session the municipal franchise was granted to unmarried women, with this comment from the conservative ex-Chancellor, in assisting to pass the Bill: "Since an unmarried woman could dispose of her property, and deal with it in any way that she thought proper," said Lord Cairns, "he did not know why she should not have a voice in saying how it should be lighted and watched, and in controlling the municipal expenditure to which that property contributed." In one of the southern counties, five large, well-managed estates, almost adjacent to each other, belong to women either unmarried or widows. Here a district, amounting in size almost to a small county, is virtually unrepresented. If the representation of property is to be a reality, it seems as if these women ought to "have a voice in choosing the representatives who are to regulate" the national "expenditure" to which

they contribute so largely. A single woman is no infant to whom the law allots trustees; she can conduct her own affairs and dispose of her estate as she sees good. The franchise is certainly an inferior privilege to such functions as these.

It is perfectly true that these women would prefer being without the franchise, but the question is, what are the arrangements by which the duties of property may be best performed? They are called upon, as a matter of course, to use "the legitimate influence of a landlord" with their tenants: why should they be allowed to shirk the responsibility, to be spared the personal onus of decision in political opinions? Are not these likely to be better weighed, more justly and well considered, if they know they can be called to account for the proper employment of their power?

It is no new theory, after all, that women should be treated as political entities. One barony, at least, was bestowed by Pitt on a single lady in right of her borough influence; and the very fact of a woman being able to use the power of a great proprietor without the check of publicity and open responsibility, inclines her to make the question a personal one, and not a trust for the good of the "republic."

With regard to a married woman, it seems to be very unwise to press her claim. Any property she possesses is, after all, represented by her husband; if she votes contrary to him, it will merely neutralize his vote; if she votes with him, it is an unnecessary reduplication; there seems no good in putting such an abstract cause of contention among married people.

In England, by manners, although not perhaps by law, the influence of woman has been more useful, calmer, less dreaded, and more open, than in any country since the days of Eve. When they have ruled it has been by acknowledged sway; the difference between Queen Elizabeth and Queen Philippa, and the Montespons and Pompadours of France. The *Maitresse du Roi* has been no recognised part in our constitution; no fine ladies like Madame de Longueville, and the other lady leaders of the Fronde, have ruled the destinies of our country according to the influence of the lover of the moment. There have been names of power amongst us, but they have been good as well as great.

In Roman Catholic countries, where the feeling for women has culminated in the adoration of the Virgin and the deification of many female saints, where the longing for feminine tenderness which could not find satisfaction in the stern ideal to which they had reduced their Christ, has erected an intercessor in "the mother of God," woman, intellectually, has been degraded curiously to the utmost, the notion of her spiritual eminence having, as it were,

stified any other. Christianity, great as its influence has been for woman, has not worked at all alike in this respect in different nationalities even close at home, and it would be curious to trace out the reason for her varying position at the present day in the different Christian countries—in America, where from the disparity of the sexes she takes a high hand as to her personal claims, but does not seem to have improved in wisdom beyond her old-world sisters; in Germany and Italy, where she holds a strangely inferior place, from the most different causes, for the German woman is generally and in some respects highly educated, while the Italian (with some exceptions in the north) is almost utterly ignorant; in France, where the influence of woman has always been more really great, probably, than in any country in the world, America not excepted, with the single exception, which however symbolizes a good deal, that they must not wear the crown—*i.e.*, be ostensibly sovereign. The Frenchman is said to be more good-tempered, the woman more imperious; in a household she is very really the better half. Partly, perhaps, in consequence of the drain upon the male part of the nation caused by its warlike propensities, the affairs of the shop, of the bureau, the management of the money of the family, in fact, has devolved in great part on her. Monsieur often is amusing himself at the *café*, while madame, nothing loth, is administering the joint affairs of the *commerce*, in which she has probably an equal stake in money, while her property is to a great extent under her own control, and is looked after very keenly; indeed, her strict attendance at the bureau is mentioned in an interesting article of the *Revue des Deux Mondes* as one reason for the fearful mortality among infants in France. Again, the power of the mother over her grown-up sons, both by law and custom, is in our eyes most extraordinary. One of Madame Sand's best-known novels runs on the refusal of the widowed mother of a marquis of forty, in full possession of his own estate, to let him marry a young lady, well-born and well-bred, but poor. No surprise is expressed; it is an ordinary incident in his social world—it is impossible for the marriage to take place without her permission.

The relation, however, between the sexes in France seems to be one of antagonism—an armed peace—constant resistance on one side, and terror of encroachment on the other. In the absence of any idea of justice, "a woman's rights are what she can get for herself;" and their amount is almost incredibly large to our notions. For instance, on the occasion of a marriage in the higher classes, the bridegroom is required as a matter of course by the young girl and her mother to renounce his profession, which is often mentioned as one reason of the frivolous life led by young men of family in France.

The sudden change in a French girl's life, the tremendous leap from her convent education to the rush of dissipation in the world, makes her temptation to independence still greater. She has not even been allowed the choice of the man who is to rule her; *he* is generally more or less in love, she has all the advantage that perfect coldness and self-possession can give. She rules by dint of her *esprit*, her strong will, her tact in pleasing the least worthy part of men; and her desire for power is evidently far greater than in England, where, after the first blush of youthful coquetry is over, a girl generally subsides rapidly after marriage into the "family woman," the wife and the mother; whereas the Frenchwoman's career only then begins. And what is considered at least to be its nature may be guessed from M. Taine's problem (for even a caricature is evidence of a popular mode of thought), "*Etant donnée la femme, c'est à dire un être illogique, subalterne, malfaisant, mais charmant comme un parfum délicieux et pernicieux,*" how is she to be treated?

In England, on the contrary, at the present moment, take it for all in all, the position of an educated woman of a certain class is probably unequalled both in legitimate influence and happiness. If she is at all qualified for it by character, she is trusted and consulted by her husband in everything; she is respected by her sons for her experience in life; she has a large field for her administrative capacities,—the schools, the cottages, the sick, the poor, both in London and the country, employ all her philanthropic energies. She is cut off from no great questions of national interest, political, literary, benevolent; if her opinion is worth having, she is listened to by men with perfect respect and attention. She wants nothing more of privilege for herself of any kind. It is not for these that any change is necessary. But because these have their "rights," in cant phrase, and indeed something more, by custom, if not by law, it is no use for them to blink the fact of the intolerable sufferings endured often by women of the lowest class without a chance of redress, or that the lives of the greater portion of the middle class are miserably wanting in interests and cultivation of any kind; while for the increasing number of women who must earn their own bread, there are hardly any fields open, and they have hitherto been even denied the facilities for fitting themselves to work which are provided so largely for men.

That this has happened by accident more than design, appears in the Reports upon Endowed Schools, which are proved to have often been intended by their founders for girls as well as boys. The committee, headed by Lord Lyttelton, sitting now upon them, has been requested to ascertain what means can be adopted in each case to add a separate provision for the education of girls, or to enable them to

share in the classes for boys, as in the national schools. At present the lower class is better provided for in this matter than the middle and upper. It is to be hoped that Government will not neglect so fair an opportunity of securing what might become a national and lasting provision for this want. Mr. Rogers has already led the way by starting a middle-class school for girls *pari passu* with the great school for boys in the City of London.

Meantime, as if to prove that girls would make use of any opportunities given them, several of the school inspectors in England and Scotland report that they found the capabilities of girls as good in general as those of boys; that although part of the school-day was devoted rightfully to needlework, they did as well as the lads of the same amount of training when taught by the same masters. In the few schools for the upper class which have existed, the acquirements of the average of boys and girls are found to run very evenly, though here and there a boy appeared who beat all the girls. The brains of women, says Dr. Barlow, quoting many authorities, English and foreign, are larger than those of men *in proportion* to the size of their bodies, while their temperaments are more nervous and sensitive; they thus require good education for their guidance more even than men; whereas cut off, as they too often have been, from the most interesting subjects in life, it is not surprising if they often throw their whole souls into petty questions with a vehemence which makes good men sigh and hard men laugh. "*Les femmes excellent à gêter leur vie,*" has been most truly said, and not seldom that of their belongings besides. Excellent women may be seen spoiling the comfort, as far as in them lies, of their "mankind," about some miserable little matter of anise and cummin to which their ill-directed conscience affixes an inordinate interest, while the greatest national questions of right and wrong (for which they have proved they can care so deeply) are to them uninteresting often because unknown; for how large a portion of them may still be said to be "brought up in the religion of darkness and fear," which Plato complained of even in his day? They are often accused of putting their affections above any abstract interest, however high, yet how many of them have shown the power to suffer and to die for the noblest causes. Martyrs are of no sex or time. "The mother of seven sons," as told in Maccabees, "saw them all slain in one day with horrible torments" for their faith, by Antiochus. Filled with courageous spirits, stirring up her womanish thoughts with a manly stomach, she stood by and exhorted them to remain firm for the right, "and last of all, after her sons, died also." Women like Vivia Perpetua, whose martyrdom for her faith was preceded by the agony of appeals from her husband holding up her baby before her, and her father entreat-



ing her to have compassion on his grey hairs. Through all the phases of persecution, Pagan, Catholic, and Protestant alike, women have never been found wanting, and not in religious questions alone—in the French Revolution the women suffered for their political faith like the men. It has been remarked that no woman ever then put forward her sex as a reason for being spared; they had “the courage of their opinions,” and went to the scaffold unflinchingly, although some of them, like Madame Roland, did not believe in any future state.

In the Indian mutiny there were no weak lamentations or complaints under the almost intolerable sufferings and privations to which the women were exposed. They had most of them spent their lives in the gossip and idleness of Indian stations, yet when courage and endurance were called for, their heroism was as great as that of the men.

The stuff is there, it only requires to be adequately made use of. In spite of what Mr. Mill says, there can be little doubt that women are by nature more pliable than men, more ready to take the colour which public opinion represents as right, and also to endure more for what they believe to be true, in small things\* as well as great. But this only makes it more incumbent upon society, which in this case means men, to see that the ideal life held up to women is a wise one, and that their education is in a wise direction. The jealousy of women acquiring knowledge, in England at least, is quite modern. At the time of the Reformation, of the revival of learning through the classics, they were allowed to obtain whatsoever they pleased of the new fields of knowledge; and Latin and Greek, through which alone these could be obtained, were freely taught to them. They suffered death again and again in political risings in England, that unpleasant proof of their importance. Lady Salisbury, Jane Grey, Arabella Stewart, were not spared because they were women; and in the feudal times, Mr. Mill declares that both politics and war were considered part of their proper business in life. Sir Thomas More, in his ideal republic, even proposes that the “priests should be few in number, of either sex.” And though we are not very likely to follow out such a counsel as this, yet northern civilization has always been based, more or less, upon respect for women, as shown alike in the honour paid to female prophets and priestesses in the earlier faiths of Teutonic and Scandinavian nations, and the ideal held up by chivalry in later Christian ages. “We may, on the whole, well admire the instinct,” says Mr. F. Newman, “which made the old Germans regard women as penetrating nearer to the

\* Would anything induce men to submit to the tortures of tight-lacing, or of the Chinese “lily feet”—utter absurdities of the most harmful kind—for the sake of being “comme il faut”—in the literal sense, “as one ought to be?”

mind of God than man does." That a large share of the higher moral and ideal work of the world may fairly be taken by her, is shown by the fact that though the male and female population is nearly equal in number, the crimes committed by men are usually five times as numerous.

Her influence now is more than sufficiently great; it is not desirable that it should be in any degree increased. What is wanted is to give her the training and discipline by which that which she has may best be used. There are symptoms on all sides of a change of thought, a desire to make more use of her powers in various work. Dean Alford, in his paper on "The Christianity of the Future," has observed, that "woman's action in the Church" has been neglected in our present civilization, that "the Reformers levelled in the dust, instead of attempting to regenerate, the whole conventual system of Catholicism." Mr. Tennyson hints in his *Guinevere* at the double power which the united action of men and women brings forth; and the reason he gives for his hero Arthur's failure is the failure of his wife. "If he could find," says the "bard,"

"A woman in her womanhood as great  
As he was in his manhood, then, he sung,  
The twain together well might change the world."

And again, in "The Holy Grail," he makes Arthur himself declare that if he can be joined to her whom he considers the pearl of women—

"Then might we live together as one life,  
And reigning with one will in everything,  
Have power on this dark land to lighten it,  
And power on this dead world to make it live."

Mr. Tennyson has insisted on the "diverse" nature of men and women in lines which have become almost hackneyed by constant use, and therefore these hints at the joint action which shall make both more strong, the division of the work of the world between them, each supplying the deficiencies of the other, are the more important.

To enable women, by the wisest teaching which the nation can give, to make themselves ready for such a future, must be our object. A move of such an extent as is now taking place in women's minds cannot be repressed, their further advance is merely a question of time; let us insure that it is made in the right direction. Not in solitary action, for which with her quick sympathies and tender affections she is eminently unfit; not by usurping the work of men either as M.P.s, Amazons, or female lawyers, nor again by dooming half the human race to the most petty trivialities by way of keeping

them virtuous and contented, shall we obtain the best work for the world. It is Iago only who condemns women to "suckle fools and chronicle small beer." To find the use of everything is the grand discovery of modern science, to waste nothing of whatever kind, and certainly not power. The body politic can hardly be made stronger by bandaging one hand tightly (even if it be the left) to prevent it from getting into mischief. A beautiful Hungarian myth says, "Woman was not taken from man's heel, that he might know he was not to trample on her, nor from his head, for she was not to rule over him, but from the rib next his heart, that she might be nearest and most necessary in every action of his life." And not until this joint action shall have been fully carried out in all work (different in kind for man and woman, and therefore for that very reason each fitting into each) shall man indeed "have power on this dead world to make it live," as the Creator of both seems to have intended for the benefit of all.

V.