

THE

N A S S A U

Literary

M A G A Z I N E .

APRIL, 1871.

*ἔνθα βουλαὶ μὲν γερόντων καὶ νέων ἀνδρῶν ἄμλλαι
καὶ χοροὶ καὶ Μοῖσα καὶ ἀγλαΐα.*

CONDUCTED

BY THE SENIOR CLASS,

PRINCETON COLLEGE.

PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY.

Still with us lingers the blest recollection
Of the sweet hours that forever are flown :—
Hands long ago that we clasped in affection
Often in fancy seem touching our own.

Hearts long ago that in fondness we cherished
Often come back to us still from the tomb.
Faces whose beauty in death that has perished
Look on us still in their mouldering bloom.

Voices once loved in the tones of their gladness
—Now that are heard on the Lethean shore—
Speak to us still in the sounds of their sadness,
And we may know them the same as of yore.

Scenes long ago that in joyance we haunted,
Memory's vista will keep for us still ;—
All will return, and with *something* enchanted
Which, every true heart with rapture, can thrill.

L. R. S.

WOMAN'S MISSION.

When the Roman Empire, pressed by fierce foes from without and by still worse enemies from within, at length fell, after a period of the wildest chaos there sprang up, Phœnix-like, on its ruins a system that has contributed not a little to the progress of the world. With the throne for its root, feudalism spread its branches over the whole land, and bore then many fair blossoms which have since developed into yet fairer fruit. It was then that there was instilled into every man's heart a love for individual liberty which has only increased with the lapse of time ; "it was feudalism which gave birth to that romantic thirst and fond-

ness for all that is noble, generous, and faithful—for that sentiment of honor, which still raises its voice in favor of the system by which it was nursed”; and under its favoring influence did woman reach her true position as the companion, and not the toy, of man. And no sooner had she attained to her proper place in society, than it became evident she had a mission to perform, a work to do; and yet it would seem that, even after so long a time, the exact character of this mission, the precise nature of this work remains still unsettled. She has tried everything, and yet seems still to be wandering the world over, like Ceres, in search of that which alone can satisfy her longings; she has sat upon the thrones of kings and, with iron hand, administered justice; she has led on embattled hosts, or, like the maid of Saragossa, calmly stood by the cannon's side, alone, yet defying an army. But in none of these has she found the true sphere of her labor: the Medici who ground the very life from France, the Catharine who exalted Russia but debased herself, and that Mary to whom the unenviable *soubriquet*, “The Bloody,” will ever cling, are but examples of women rulers, who, fearful of weakness, mistake cruelty for strength. True, there was an Elizabeth as well as a Mary, an Isabella as well as a Catharine, but, whenever a good, unswerving queen appears, the universal surprise of mankind shows it to be against nature. Nor is her place in the van of armies;—it is not woman's mission to destroy, but to save. For, whatever else it may be, her work is undoubtedly a saving work. We said she has tried everything, but has she in everything failed? By no means; and there is one sphere in which she moves without a rival—in teaching. This we hold to be one great labor laid on her shoulders,—the one great duty imposed on her, who, though weak for bending men's wills to submit to social regulations, is yet strong for bending men's hearts to follow after the good and the beautiful.

We cannot form even a faint conception of what would be the state of affairs if woman's influence should be removed from all action on the youth of the country, and yet, if we look at Sparta, we can gain some small foundation for an imperfect idea. We know that there the children, on reaching a certain age, were taken from their mothers and raised in a great state nursery. And what was the effect? A nation of warriors, ignorant, despising literature and art, and in lewdness surpassing all Greece, rose up,—a nation strong, indeed, in battle, weak, though, in intellect, weaker still in morality. We are forced to recognize the fact that in no such way can *men* be produced; woman's influence is absolutely necessary. How quickly does the child learn when it is his mother who teaches him! With what avidity does he drink the too often bitter waters of Helicon, or struggle up the rough and precipitous sides of Parnassus, when his mother's hand offers the draught, or is reached out to aid him in his tiresome ascent! And, in after years, how does he cherish the memory of the sweet hours spent in quaffing deep draughts of youthful lore, at her knee!—how firmly does every precept he has learned of her fix itself in his mind, and come up again and again, to his recollection, either to turn him from an evil course or to urge him on to a noble work! That noble philanthropist, the benefactor of his race, the honored among the honored, owes all his greatness to principles long ago instilled into his heart by the sweet, soft voice of his mother; that scholar, bent under the weight of his vast erudition, owes all his knowledge to the fructification of the first seeds of learning scattered in his mind by his mother's hand; that statesman, leading his country on in a course as right as it is politic, owes all his usefulness to precepts caught from his mother's lips. Woman, desire not suffrage; truly thou dost already, through thy sons, rule the world.

But she not only controls the thought, and hence the deeds, of the next generation, but also exerts an immense influence over the present; great as is her power over the youth, it is hardly greater than that she exercises over those of maturer years. We hazard nothing in asserting that, were she in full possession of all the advantages supposed to be derived from the right to vote, she would be but little more powerful than she now is, without them. For, she is not only the instructor of youth, but also the guide of manhood, the stay of his moral nature, his oracle in matters of taste. Her teaching to man is of two kinds, —æsthetical and moral. Intellectual it is not, for, of course, she is not fitted to train a mind stronger than her own. In poetry and all æsthetic literature she is, indeed, his rival, but conceive, if you can, of a Bacon, or Descartes, or Newton, or even a Gibbon, or Hume, or Macaulay, in her ranks. The very idea is absurd; and so, in purely mental concerns, man is, instead of her scholar, her preceptor.

Woman is the very personification of beauty and shows herself also to be the embodiment of taste. Formed by nature in a fashion evidently not meant for strength but for grace, she is well fitted to teach man the true importance of a well-directed and unerring appreciation of beauty. Female taste, indeed, has become almost a by-word, and matters of this kind man is rightly prone to leave to her arbitration. Every thing she touches she beautifies; under her hands the coarsest materials grow fine, and, by a well chosen contrast or harmony, the dullest colors, bright; the Philosopher's stone, which so enhances the value of every article it touches, seems, indeed, to be entirely at her command. She is, then, well-fitted to be man's instructor in beauty, nor can the value of such an appreciation of it, as she can impart, be doubted. Nothing is more elevating or

more conducive to refinement than the possession of the tasteful and the beautiful in whatever form,—in art, in literature, or even in the common concerns of life. Civilization is immensely indebted to them, and, just in proportion as a people is civilized, does it possess a keen æsthetic sense. Indeed, a nation's history could well be written from its art. The calm, impassive, changeless face of the Sphinx tells of a people, lost in a vast antiquity, to whom no labor was too arduous, no work impracticable, who dwelt among grand and picturesque scenery, who could accomplish that, the very thought of which would appal less energetic races. The Grecian art of the flourishing period, finding its expression in perfect statuary, naked, indeed, but never indecent, could not have arisen elsewhere than in Greece, where woman reached her highest beauty, and man his greatest skill. Trace this down to the Roman period, and see how each era of history is marked by a corresponding change of art, until, in the time of Nero, it found its culmination in a sensuousness that but too truly reflected the lewdness of the age. Italian and Flemish art, too, have their peculiar characteristics, and contain, embalmed in their colors, not only genius, but also history. And as in art, so in all other matters of taste; were it not for a sense of beauty, man would remain a savage, and were it not for woman, he could never reach a high sense of beauty.

But a yet grander work has she to perform. While she does not ascend the pulpit and thence pour forth eloquent appeals to mankind to turn from the wickedness of their ways, yet who can estimate her moral influence? Who can recount the countless thousands saved by her instrumentality? who number the innumerable hosts snatched from the flames of Hell by her fair hands,—hands, however weak, strong to drag back a soul from perdition! It is true by woman sin entered into the world, but by woman came also

salvation,—if we have an Eve, we have also a Mary; if one strange woman crieth in our ears, there are a thousand drawing us back, and uttering to our hearts a solemn warning. If man is naturally magnanimous, woman is naturally virtuous, and by far the greater part of virtue man possesses is drawn from woman's precepts. She it is that fills his mind with noble thoughts: she it is that urges him on to noble deeds; she it is that incites him to execute noble plans. With her, and by her influence, he is able to act as becomes him who was made in the image of the Almighty; without her he could be but a higher animal, an intellectual beast, it is true, but still a beast without knowledge of good, without appreciation of beauty.

Thus all that is pure and noble in man, is derived from woman's influence. The ancients rightly represented the muses by female forms, nor are they mere fabulous beings,—they still exist but with a large accession to their number; each man, if he but knew it, cherishes one in his own household, one too, who, knowing him better, serves him better than could the classic nine. Such, then, is woman's work: to train man to a due appreciation of the good and the beautiful,—to prepare him for the contest for the right, to fit him to strive after the true ideal of beauty. It is a grand work; and one of which no woman need be ashamed. Look at it well, examine it in all its bearings, and then ask yourself what is its full meaning. There can be but one answer: to impart to man all that makes him distinctively a man. Brutes reason, but brutes are not moral beings; man alone is religious and woman is the instrument, in the divine hands, of making him so. There is no need for her to strive after new rights, for she can find nothing more noble to do than what she now has,—she has already reached the loftiest mission earth can afford; she can desire nothing higher, for nothing higher exists.