

***SARAH
MARGARET
FULLER
OSSOLI***

**VOTES FOR
WOMEN**

***WOMAN
IN THE 19TH
CENTURY***

Sarah Margaret Fuller Ossoli

Woman in the 19th Century

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PREFACE.

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It has been thought desirable that such papers of Margaret Fuller Ossoli as pertained to the condition, sphere and duties of Woman, should be collected and published together. The present volume contains, not only her "Woman in the Nineteenth Century,"—which has been before published, but for some years out of print, and inaccessible to readers who have sought it,—but also several other papers, which have appeared at various times in the *Tribune* and elsewhere, and yet more which have never till now been published.

My free access to her private manuscripts has given to me many papers, relating to Woman, never intended for publication, which yet seem needful to this volume, in order to present a complete and harmonious view of her thoughts on this important theme. I have preferred to publish them without alteration, as most just to her views and to the reader; though, doubtless, she would have varied their expression and form before giving them to the press.

It seems right here to remark, In order to avoid any misapprehension, that Margaret Ossoli's thoughts were not directed so exclusively to the subject of the present volume as have been the minds of some others. As to the movement for the emancipation of Woman from the unjust burdens and disabilities to which she has been subject even in our own land, my sister could neither remain indifferent nor silent; yet she preferred, as in respect to every other reform, to act independently and to speak independently from her own stand-point, and never to merge her individuality in any existing organization. This she did, not as condemning such organizations, nor yet as judging them wholly unwise or uncalled for, but because she believed she could herself accomplish more for their true and high

objects, unfettered by such organizations, than if a member of them. The opinions avowed throughout this volume, and wherever expressed, will, then, be found, whether consonant with the reader's or no, in all cases honestly and heartily her own,—the result of her own thought and faith. She never speaks, never did speak, for any clique or sect, but as her individual judgment, her reason and conscience, her observation and experience, taught her to speak.

I could have wished that some one other than a brother should have spoken a few fitting words of Margaret Fuller, as a woman, to form a brief but proper accompaniment to this volume, which may reach some who have never read her "Memoirs," recently published, or have never known her in personal life. This seemed the more desirable, because the strictest verity in speaking of her must seem, to such as knew her not, to be eulogy. But, after several disappointments as to the editorship of the volume, the duty, at last, has seemed to devolve upon me; and I have no reason to shrink from it but a sense of inadequacy.

It is often supposed that literary women, and those who are active and earnest in promoting great intellectual, philanthropic, or religious movements, must of necessity neglect the domestic concerns of life. It may be that this is sometimes so, nor can such neglect be too severely reprehended; yet this is by no means a necessary result. Some of the most devoted mothers the world has ever known, and whose homes were the abode of every domestic virtue, themselves the embodiment of all these, have been women whose minds were highly cultured, who loved and devoted both thought and time to literature, and were active in philanthropic and diffusive efforts for the welfare of the race.

The letter to M., which is published on page 345, is inserted chiefly as showing the integrity and wisdom with which Margaret advised her friends; the frankness with which she pointed out to every young woman who asked

counsel any deficiencies of character, and the duties of life; and that among these latter she gave due place to the humblest which serve to make home attractive and happy. It is but simple justice for me to bear, in conjunction with many others, my tribute to her domestic virtues and fidelity to all home duties. That her mind found chief delight in the lowest forms of these duties may not be true, and it would be sad if it were; but it is strictly true that none, however humble, were either slighted or shunned.

In common with a younger sister and brother, I shared her care in my early instruction, and found over one of the truest counsellors in a sister who scorned not the youngest mind nor the simplest intellectual wants in her love for communion, through converse or the silent page, with the minds of the greatest and most gifted.

During a lingering illness, in childhood, well do I remember her as the angel of the sick-chamber, reading much to me from books useful and appropriate, and telling many a narrative not only fitted to wile away the pain of disease and the weariness of long confinement, but to elevate the mind and heart, and to direct them to all things noble and holy; over ready to watch while I slept, and to perform every gentle and kindly office. But her care of the sick—that she did not neglect, but was eminent in that sphere of womanly duty, even when no tie of kindred claimed this of her, Mr. Cass's letter abundantly shows; and also that this gentleness was united to a heroism which most call manly, but which, I believe, may as justly be called truly womanly. Mr. Cass's letter is inserted because it arrived too late to find a place in her "Memoirs," and yet more because it bears much on Margaret Ossoli's characteristics as a woman.

A few also of her private letters and papers, not bearing, save, indirectly, on the subject of this volume, are yet inserted in it, as further illustrative of her thought, feeling and action, in life's various relations. It is believed that

nothing which exhibits a true woman, especially in her relations to others as friend, sister, daughter, wife, or mother, can fail to interest and be of value to her sex, indeed to all who are interested in human welfare and advancement, since these latter so much depend on the fidelity of Woman. Nor will anything pertaining to the education and care of children be deemed irrelevant, especially by mothers, upon whom these duties must always largely devolve.

Of the intellectual gifts and wide culture of Margaret Fuller there is no need that I should speak, nor is it wise that one standing in my relation to her should. Those who knew her personally feel that no words ever flowed from her pen equalling the eloquent utterances of her lips; yet her works, though not always a clear oppression of her thoughts, are the evidences to which the world will look as proof of her mental greatness.

On one point, however, I do wish to bear testimony—not needed with those who knew her well, but interesting, perhaps, to some readers into whose bands this volume may fall. It is on a subject which one who knew her from his childhood up—at *home*, where best the *heart* and *soul* can be known,—in the unrestrained hours of domestic life,—in various scenes, and not for a few days, nor under any peculiar circumstances—can speak with confidence, because he speaks what he "doth know, and testifieth what he hath seen." It relates to her Christian faith and hope. "With all her intellectual gifts, with all her high, moral, and noble characteristics," there are some who will ask, "was her intellectual power sanctified by Christian faith as its basis? Were her moral qualities, her beneficent life, the results of a renewed heart?" I feel no hesitation here, nor would think it worth while to answer such questions at all, were her life to be read and known by all who read this volume, and were I not influenced also, in some degree, by the tone which has characterized a few sectarian reviews of

her works, chiefly in foreign periodicals. Surely, if the Saviour's test, "By their fruits ye shall know them," be the true one, Margaret Ossoli was preeminently a Christian. If a life of constant self-sacrifice,—if devotion to the welfare of kindred and the race,—if conformity to what she believed God's law, so that her life seemed ever the truest form of prayer, active obedience to the Deity,—in fine, if carrying Christianity into all the departments of action, so far as human infirmity allows,—if these be the proofs of a Christian, then whoever has read her "Memoirs" thoughtfully, and without sectarian prejudice or the use of sectarian standards of judgment, must feel her to have been a Christian. But not alone in outward life, in mind and heart, too, was she a Christian. The being brought into frequent and intimate contact with religious persons has been one of the chief privileges of my vocation, but never yet have I met with any person whose reverence for holy things was deeper than hers. Abhorring, as all honest minds must, every species of cant, she respected true religious thought and feeling, by whomsoever cherished. God seemed nearer to her than to any person I have ever known. In the influences of His Holy Spirit upon the heart she fully believed, and in experience realized them. Jesus, the friend of man, can never have been more truly loved and honored than she loved and honored him. I am aware that this is strong language, but strength of language cannot equal the strength of my conviction on a point where I have had the best opportunities of judgment. Rich as is the religion of Jesus in its list of holy confessors, yet it can spare and would exclude none who in heart, mind and life, confessed and revered him as did she. Among my earliest recollections, is her devoting much time to a thorough examination of the evidences of Christianity, and ultimately declaring that to her, better than all arguments or usual processes of proof, was the soul's want of a divine religion, and the voice within that soul which declared the teachings of Christ to be true

and from God; and one of my most cherished possessions is that Bible which she so diligently and thoughtfully read, and which bears, in her own handwriting, so many proofs of discriminating and prayerful perusal. As in regard to reformatory movements so here, she joined no organized body of believers, sympathizing with all of them whose views were noble and Christian; deploring and bearing faithful testimony against anything she deemed narrowness or perversion in theology or life.

This volume from her hand is now before the reader. The fact that a large share of it was never written or revised by its authoress for publication will be kept in view, as explaining any inaccuracy of expression or repetition of thought, should such occur in its pages. Nor will it be deemed surprising, if, in papers written by so progressive a person, at so various periods of life, and under widely-varied circumstances, there should not always be found perfect union as to every expressed opinion.

It is probable that this will soon be followed by another volume, containing a republication of "Summer on the Lakes," and also the "Letters from Europe," by the same hand.

In the preparation of this volume much valuable assistance has been afforded by Mr. Greeley, of the New York *Tribune*, who has been earnest in his desire and efforts for the diffusion of what Margaret has written.

A. B. F.

BOSTON, *May 10th*, 1855.

INTRODUCTION.

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The problem of Woman's position, or "sphere,"—of her duties, responsibilities, rights and immunities as Woman,—fitly attracts a large and still-increasing measure of attention from the thinkers and agitators of our time, The legislators, so called,—those who ultimately enact into statutes what the really governing class (to wit, the thinkers) have originated, matured and gradually commended to the popular comprehension and acceptance,—are not as yet much occupied with this problem, only fitfully worried and more or less consciously puzzled by it. More commonly they merely echo the mob's shallow retort to the petition of any strong-minded daughter or sister, who demands that she be allowed a voice in disposing of the money wrenched from her hard earnings by inexorable taxation, or in shaping the laws by which she is ruled, judged, and is liable to be sentenced to prison or to death, "It is a woman's business to obey her husband, keep his home tidy, and nourish and train his children." But when she rejoins to this, "Very true; but suppose I choose not to have a husband, or am not chosen for a wife—what then? I am still subject to your laws. Why am I not entitled, as a rational human being, to a voice in shaping them? I have physical needs, and must somehow earn a living. Why should I not be at liberty to earn it in any honest and useful calling?"—the mob's flout is hushed, and the legislator is struck dumb also. They were already at the end of their scanty resources of logic, and it would be cruel for woman to ask further: "Suppose me a wife, and my husband a drunken prodigal—what am I to do then? May I not earn food for my babes without being exposed to have it snatched from their mouths to replenish the rumrunner's till, and aggravate my husband's madness? If some

sympathizing relative sees fit to leave me a bequest wherewith to keep my little ones together, why may I not be legally enabled to secure this to their use and benefit? In short, why am I not regarded by the law as a *soul*, responsible for my acts to God and humanity, and not as a mere body, devoted to the unreasoning service of my husband?" The state gives no answer, and the champions of her policy evince wisdom in imitating her silence.

The writer of the following pages was one of the earliest as well as ablest among American women, to demand for her sex equality before the law with her titular lord and master, Her writings on this subject have the force which springs from the ripening of profound reflection into assured conviction. She wrote as one who had observed, and who deeply felt what she deliberately uttered. Others have since spoken more fluently, more variously, with a greater affluence of illustration; but none, it is believed, more earnestly or more forcibly. It is due to her memory, as well as to the great and living cause of which she was so eminent and so fearless an advocate, that what she thought and said with regard to the position of her sex and its limitations, should be fully and fairly placed before the public. For several years past her principal essay on "Woman," here given, has not been purchasable at any price, and has only with great difficulty been accessible to the general reader. To place it within the reach of those who need and require it, is the main impulse to the publication of this volume; but the accompanying essays and papers will be found equally worthy of thoughtful consideration.

H. GREELEY.

PREFACE TO WOMAN IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

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The following essay is a reproduction, modified and expanded, of an article published in "The Dial, Boston, July, 1843," under the title of "The Great Lawsuit.—Man *versus* Men; Woman *versus* Women."

This article excited a good deal of sympathy, and still more interest. It is in compliance with wishes expressed from many quarters that it is prepared for publication in its present form.

Objections having been made to the former title, as not sufficiently easy to be understood, the present has been substituted as expressive of the main purpose of the essay; though, by myself, the other is preferred, partly for the reason others do not like it,—that is, that it requires some thought to see what it means, and might thus prepare the reader to meet me on my own ground. Besides, it offers a larger scope, and is, in that way, more just to my desire. I meant by that title to intimate the fact that, while it is the destiny of Man, in the course of the ages, to ascertain and fulfil the law of his being, so that his life shall be seen, as a whole, to be that of an angel or messenger, the action of prejudices and passions which attend, in the day, the growth of the individual, is continually obstructing the holy work that is to make the earth a part of heaven. By Man I mean both man and woman; these are the two halves of one thought. I lay no especial stress on the welfare of either. I believe that the development of the one cannot be effected without that of the other. My highest wish is that this truth should be distinctly and rationally apprehended, and the conditions of life and freedom recognized as the

same for the daughters and the sons of time; twin exponents of a divine thought.

I solicit a sincere and patient attention from those who open the following pages at all. I solicit of women that they will lay it to heart to ascertain what is for them the liberty of law. It is for this, and not for any, the largest, extension of partial privileges that I seek. I ask them, if interested by these suggestions, to search their own experience and intuitions for better, and fill up with fit materials the trenches that hedge them in. From men I ask a noble and earnest attention to anything that can be offered on this great and still obscure subject, such as I have met from many with whom I stand in private relations.

And may truth, unpolluted by prejudice, vanity or selfishness, be granted daily more and more as the due of inheritance, and only valuable conquest for us all!

November, 1844.

PART I

WOMAN IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

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"Frailty, thy name is WOMAN."

"The Earth waits for her Queen."

The connection between these quotations may not be obvious, but it is strict. Yet would any contradict us, if we made them applicable to the other side, and began also,

Frailty, thy name is MAN.

The Earth waits for its King?

Yet Man, if not yet fully installed in his powers, has given much earnest of his claims. Frail he is indeed,—how frail! how impure! Yet often has the vein of gold displayed itself amid the baser ores, and Man has appeared before us in princely promise worthy of his future.

If, oftentimes, we see the prodigal son feeding on the husks in the fair field no more his own, anon we raise the eyelids, heavy from bitter tears, to behold in him the radiant apparition of genius and love, demanding not less than the all of goodness, power and beauty. We see that in him the largest claim finds a due foundation. That claim is for no partial sway, no exclusive possession. He cannot be satisfied with any one gift of life, any one department of knowledge or telescopic peep at the heavens. He feels himself called to understand and aid Nature, that she may, through his intelligence, be raised and interpreted; to be a student of, and servant to, the universe-spirit; and king of his planet, that, as an angelic minister he may bring it into conscious harmony with the law of that spirit.

In clear, triumphant moments, many times, has rung through the spheres the prophecy of his jubilee; and those moments, though past in time, have been translated into eternity by thought; the bright signs they left hang in the heavens, as single stars or constellations, and, already, a thickly sown radiance consoles the wanderer in the darkest night. Other heroes since Hercules have fulfilled the zodiac of beneficent labors, and then given up their mortal part to the fire without a murmur; while no God dared deny that they should have their reward,

Siquis tamen, Hercule, siquis
Forte Deo doliturus erit, daia praemia nollet,
Sed meruisse dari sciet, invitus que probabit,
Assensere Dei

Sages and lawgivers have bent their whole nature to the search for truth, and thought themselves happy if they could buy, with the sacrifice of all temporal ease and pleasure, one seed for the future Eden. Poets and priests have strung the lyre with the heart-strings, poured out their best blood upon the altar, which, reared anew from age to age, shall at last sustain the flame pure enough to rise to highest heaven. Shall we not name with as deep a benediction those who, if not so immediately, or so consciously, in connection with the eternal truth, yet, led and fashioned by a divine instinct, serve no less to develop and interpret the open secret of love passing into life, energy creating for the purpose of happiness; the artist whose hand, drawn by a preexistent harmony to a certain medium, moulds it to forms of life more highly and completely organized than are seen elsewhere, and, by carrying out the intention of nature, reveals her meaning to those who are not yet wise enough to divine it; the philosopher who listens steadily for laws and causes, and from those obvious infers those yet unknown; the historian who, in faith that all events must have their reason and their

aim, records them, and thus fills archives from which the youth of prophets may be fed; the man of science dissecting the statements, testing the facts and demonstrating order, even where he cannot its purpose?

Lives, too, which bear none of these names, have yielded tones of no less significance. The candlestick set in a low place has given light as faithfully, where it was needed, as that upon the hill, In close alleys, in dismal nooks, the Word has been read as distinctly, as when shown by angels to holy men in the dark prison. Those who till a spot of earth scarcely larger than is wanted for a grave, have deserved that the sun should shine upon its sod till violets answer.

So great has been, from time to time, the promise, that, in all ages, men have said the gods themselves came down to dwell with them; that the All-Creating wandered on the earth to taste, in a limited nature, the sweetness of virtue; that the All-Sustaining incarnated himself to guard, in space and time, the destinies of this world; that heavenly genius dwelt among the shepherds, to sing to them and teach them how to sing. Indeed,

"Der stets den Hirten gnadig sich bewies."

"He has constantly shown himself favorable to shepherds."

And the dwellers in green pastures and natural students of the stars were selected to hail, first among men, the holy child, whose life and death were to present the type of excellence, which has sustained the heart of so large a portion of mankind in these later generations.

Such marks have been made by the footsteps of *man* (still, alas! to be spoken of as the *ideal* man), wherever he has passed through the wilderness of *men*, and whenever the pigmies stepped in one of those, they felt dilate within the breast somewhat that promised nobler stature and purer blood. They were impelled to forsake their evil ways of decrepit scepticism and covetousness of corruptible possessions. Convictions flowed in upon them. They, too,

raised the cry: God is living, now, to-day; and all beings are brothers, for they are his children. Simple words enough, yet which only angelic natures can use or hear in their full, free sense.

These were the triumphant moments; but soon the lower nature took its turn, and the era of a truly human life was postponed.

Thus is man still a stranger to his inheritance, still a pleader, still a pilgrim. Yet his happiness is secure in the end. And now, no more a glimmering consciousness, but assurance begins to be felt and spoken, that the highest ideal Man can form of his own powers is that which he is destined to attain. Whatever the soul knows how to seek, it cannot fail to obtain. This is the Law and the Prophets. Knock and it shall be opened; seek and ye shall find. It is demonstrated; it is a maxim. Man no longer paints his proper nature in some form, and says, "Prometheus had it; it is God-like;" but "Man must have it; it is human." However disputed by many, however ignorantly used, or falsified by those who do receive it, the fact of an universal, unceasing revelation has been too clearly stated in words to be lost sight of in thought; and sermons preached from the text, "Be ye perfect," are the only sermons of a pervasive and deep-searching influence.

But, among those who meditate upon this text, there is a great difference of view as to the way in which perfection shall be sought.

"Through the intellect," say some. "Gather from every growth of life its seed of thought; look behind every symbol for its law; if thou canst see clearly, the rest will follow."

"Through the life," say others. "Do the best thou knowest today. Shrink not from frequent error in this gradual, fragmentary state. Follow thy light for as much as it will show thee; be faithful as far as thou canst, in hope that faith presently will lead to sight. Help others, without blaming their need of thy help. Love much, and be forgiven."

"It needs not intellect, needs not experience," says a third. "If you took the true way, your destiny would be accomplished, in a purer and more natural order. You would not learn through facts of thought or action, but express through them the certainties of wisdom. In quietness yield thy soul to the causal soul. Do not disturb thy apprenticeship by premature effort; neither check the tide of instruction by methods of thy own. Be still; seek not, but wait in obedience. Thy commission will be given."

Could we indeed say what we want, could we give a description of the child that is lost, he would be found. As soon as the soul can affirm clearly that a certain demonstration is wanted, it is at hand. When the Jewish prophet described the Lamb, as the expression of what was required by the coming era, the time drew nigh. But we say not, see not as yet, clearly, what we would. Those who call for a more triumphant expression of love, a love that cannot be crucified, show not a perfect sense of what has already been given. Love has already been expressed, that made all things new, that gave the worm its place and ministry as well as the eagle; a love to which it was alike to descend into the depths of hell, or to sit at the right hand of the Father.

Yet, no doubt, a new manifestation is at hand, a new hour in the day of Man. We cannot expect to see any one sample of completed being, when the mass of men still lie engaged in the sod, or use the freedom of their limbs only with wolfish energy. The tree cannot come to flower till its root be free from the cankering worm, and its whole growth open to air and light. While any one is base, none can be entirely free and noble. Yet something new shall presently be shown of the life of man, for hearts crave, if minds do not know how to ask it.

Among the strains of prophecy, the following, by an earnest mind of a foreign land, written some thirty years ago, is not yet outgrown; and it has the merit of being a

positive appeal from the heart, instead of a critical declaration what Man should *not* do.

"The ministry of Man implies that he must be filled from the divine fountains which are being engendered through all eternity, so that, at the mere name of his master, he may be able to cast all his enemies into the abyss; that he may deliver all parts of nature from the barriers that imprison them; that he may purge the terrestrial atmosphere from the poisons that infect it; that he may preserve the bodies of men from the corrupt influences that surround, and the maladies that afflict them; still more, that he may keep their souls pure from the malignant insinuations which pollute, and the gloomy images that obscure them; that he may restore its serenity to the Word, which false words of men fill with mourning and sadness; that he may satisfy the desires of the angels, who await from him the development of the marvels of nature; that, in fine, his world may be filled with God, as eternity is." [1]

[Footnote: St. Martin]

Another attempt we will give, by an obscure observer of our own day and country, to draw some lines of the desired image. It was suggested by seeing the design of Crawford's Orpheus, and connecting with the circumstance of the American, in his garret at Rome, making choice of this subject, that of Americans here at home showing such ambition to represent the character, by calling their prose and verse "Orphic sayings"—"Orphics." We wish we could add that they have shown that musical apprehension of the progress of Nature through her ascending gradations which entitled them so to do, but their attempts are frigid, though sometimes grand; in their strain we are not warmed by the fire which fertilized the soil of Greece.

Orpheus was a lawgiver by theocratic commission. He understood nature, and made her forms move to his music.

He told her secrets in the form of hymns, Nature as seen in the mind of God. His soul went forth toward all beings, yet could remain sternly faithful to a chosen type of excellence. Seeking what he loved, he feared not death nor hell; neither could any shape of dread daunt his faith in the power of the celestial harmony that filled his soul.

It seemed significant of the state of things in this country, that the sculptor should have represented the seer at the moment when he was obliged with his hand to shade his eyes.

Each Orpheus must to the depths descend;
For only thus the Poet can be wise;
Must make the sad Persephone his friend,
And buried love to second life arise;
Again his love must lose through too much love,
Must lose his life by living life too true,
For what he sought below is passed above,
Already done is all that he would do
Must tune all being with his single lyre,
Must melt all rooks free from their primal pain,
Must search all nature with his one soul's fire,
Must bind anew all forms in heavenly chain.
If he already sees what he must do,
Well may he shade his eyes from the far-shining view.

A better comment could not be made on what is required to perfect Man, and place him in that superior position for which he was designed, than by the interpretation of Bacon upon the legends of the Syren coast "When the wise Ulysses passed," says he, "he caused his mariners to stop their ears, with wax, knowing there was in them no power to resist the lure of that voluptuous song. But he, the much experienced man, who wished to be experienced in all, and use all to the service of wisdom, desired to hear the song that he might understand its meaning. Yet, distrusting his own power to be firm in his better purpose, he caused himself to be bound to the mast, that he might be kept secure against his own weakness. But Orpheus passed unfettered, so absorbed in

singing hymns to the gods that he could not even hear those sounds of degrading enchantment."

Meanwhile, not a few believe, and men themselves have expressed the opinion, that the time is come when Eurydice is to call for an Orpheus, rather than Orpheus for Eurydice; that the idea of Man, however imperfectly brought out, has been far more so than that of Woman; that she, the other half of the same thought, the other chamber of the heart of life, needs now take her turn in the full pulsation, and that improvement in the daughters will best aid in the reformation of the sons of this age.

It should be remarked that, as the principle of liberty is better understood, and more nobly interpreted, a broader protest is made in behalf of Woman. As men become aware that few men have had a fair chance, they are inclined to say that no women have had a fair chance. The French Revolution, that strangely disguised angel, bore witness in favor of Woman, but interpreted her claims no less ignorantly than those of Man. Its idea of happiness did not rise beyond outward enjoyment, unobstructed by the tyranny of others. The title it gave was "citoyen," "citoyenne;" and it is not unimportant to Woman that even this species of equality was awarded her. Before, she could be condemned to perish on the scaffold for treason, not as a citizen, but as a subject. The right with which this title then invested a human being was that of bloodshed and license. The Goddess of Liberty was impure. As we read the poem addressed to her, not long since, by Beranger, we can scarcely refrain from tears as painful as the tears of blood that flowed when "such crimes were committed in her name." Yes! Man, born to purify and animate the unintelligent and the cold, can, in his madness, degrade and pollute no less the fair and the chaste. Yet truth was prophesied in the ravings of that hideous fever, caused by long ignorance and abuse. Europe is conning a valued

lesson from the blood-stained page. The same tendencies, further unfolded, will bear good fruit in this country.

Yet, by men in this country, as by the Jews, when Moses was leading them to the promised land, everything has been done that inherited depravity could do, to hinder the promise of Heaven from its fulfilment. The cross, here as elsewhere, has been planted only to be blasphemed by cruelty and fraud. The name of the Prince of Peace has been profaned by all kinds of injustice toward the Gentile whom he said he came to save. But I need not speak of what has been done towards the Red Man, the Black Man. Those deeds are the scoff of the world; and they have been accompanied by such pious words that the gentlest would not dare to intercede with "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Here, as elsewhere, the gain of creation consists always in the growth of individual minds, which live and aspire, as flowers bloom and birds sing, in the midst of morasses; and in the continual development of that thought, the thought of human destiny, which is given to eternity adequately to express, and which ages of failure only seemingly impede. Only seemingly; and whatever seems to the contrary, this country is as surely destined to elucidate a great moral law, as Europe was to promote the mental culture of Man.

Though the national independence be blurred by the servility of individuals; though freedom and equality have been proclaimed only to leave room for a monstrous display of slave-dealing and slave-keeping; though the free American so often feels himself free, like the Roman, only to pamper his appetites and his indolence through the misery of his fellow-beings; still it is not in vain that the verbal statement has been made, "All men are born free and equal." There it stands, a golden certainty wherewith to encourage the good, to shame the bad. The New World may be called clearly to perceive that it incurs the utmost penalty if it reject or oppress the sorrowful brother. And, if

men are deaf, the angels hear. But men cannot be deaf. It is inevitable that an external freedom, an independence of the encroachments of other men, such as has been achieved for the nation, should be so also for every member of it. That which has once been clearly conceived in the intelligence cannot fail, sooner or later, to be acted out. It has become a law as irrevocable as that of the Medes in their ancient dominion; men will privately sin against it, but the law, as expressed by a leading mind of the age,

"Tutti fatti a sembianza d'un Solo,
Figli tutti d'un solo riscatto,
In qual'ora, in qual parte del suolo
Trascorriamo quest' aura vital,
Siam fratelli, siam stretti ad un patto:
Maladetto colui che lo infrange,
Che s'innalza sul finoco che piange
Che contrista uno spirto immortal." [2] [Footnote: Manzoni]

"All made in the likeness of the One.
All children of one ransom,
In whatever hour, in whatever part of the soil,
We draw this vital air,
We are brothers; we must be bound by one compact;
Accursed he who infringes it,
Who raises himself upon the weak who weep,
Who saddens an immortal spirit."

This law cannot fail of universal recognition. Accursed be he who willingly saddens an immortal spirit—doomed to infamy in later, wiser ages, doomed in future stages of his own being to deadly penance, only short of death. Accursed be he who sins in ignorance, if that ignorance be caused by sloth.

We sicken no less at the pomp than the strife of words. We feel that never were lungs so puffed with the wind of declamation, on moral and religious subjects, as now. We are tempted to implore these "word-heroes," these word-Catos, word-Christos, to beware of cant [3] [Footnote: Dr. Johnson's one piece of advice should be written on every door: "Clear your mind of cant." But Byron, to whom it was

so acceptable, in clearing away the noxious vine, shook down the building. Sterling's emendation is worthy of honor:

"Realize your cant, not cast it off."]

above all things; to remember that hypocrisy is the most hopeless as well as the meanest of crimes, and that those must surely be polluted by it, who do not reserve a part of their morality and religion for private use. Landor says that he cannot have a great deal of mind who cannot afford to let the larger part of it lie fallow; and what is true of genius is not less so of virtue. The tongue is a valuable member, but should appropriate but a small part of the vital juices that are needful all over the body. We feel that the mind may "grow black and rancid in the smoke" even "of altars." We start up from the harangue to go into our closet and shut the door. There inquires the spirit, "Is this rhetoric the bloom of healthy blood, or a false pigment artfully laid on?" And yet again we know where is so much smoke, must be some fire; with so much talk about virtue and freedom, must be mingled some desire for them; that it cannot be in vain that such have become the common topics of conversation among men, rather than schemes for tyranny and plunder, that the very newspapers see it best to proclaim themselves "Pilgrims," "Puritans," "Heralds of Holiness." The king that maintains so costly a retinue cannot be a mere boast, or Carabbas fiction. We have waited here long in the dust; we are tired and hungry; but the triumphal procession must appear at last.

Of all its banners, none has been more steadily upheld, and under none have more valor and willingness for real sacrifices been shown, than that of the champions of the enslaved African. And this band it is, which, partly from a natural following out of principles, partly because many women have been prominent in that cause, makes, just now, the warmest appeal in behalf of Woman.

Though there has been a growing liberality on this subject, yet society at large is not so prepared for the demands of this party, but that its members are, and will be for some time, coldly regarded as the Jacobins of their day.

"Is it not enough," cries the irritated trader, "that you have done all you could to break up the national union, and thus destroy the prosperity of our country, but now you must be trying to break up family union, to take my wife away from the cradle and the kitchen-hearth to vote at polls, and preach from a pulpit? Of course, if she does such things, she cannot attend to those of her own sphere. She is happy enough as she is. She has more leisure than I have,—every means of improvement, every indulgence."

"Have you asked her whether she was satisfied with these *indulgences*?"

"No, but I know she is. She is too amiable to desire what would make me unhappy, and too judicious to wish to step beyond the sphere of her sex. I will never consent to have our peace disturbed by any such discussions."

"'Consent—you?' it is not consent from you that is in question—it is assent from your wife."

"Am not I the head of my house?"

"You are not the head of your wife. God has given her a mind of her own."

"I am the head, and she the heart."

"God grant you play true to one another, then! I suppose I am to be grateful that you did not say she was only the hand. If the head represses no natural pulse of the heart, there can be no question as to your giving your consent. Both will be of one accord, and there needs but to present any question to get a full and true answer. There is no need of precaution, of indulgence, nor consent. But our doubt is whether the heart *does* consent with the head, or only obeys its decrees with a passiveness that precludes the exercise of its natural powers, or a repugnance that turns sweet qualities to bitter, or a doubt that lays waste the fair

occasions of life. It is to ascertain the truth that we propose some liberating measures."

Thus vaguely are these questions proposed and discussed at present. But their being proposed at all implies much thought, and suggests more. Many women are considering within themselves what they need that they have not, and what they can have if they find they need it. Many men are considering whether women are capable of being and having more than they are and have, *and* whether, if so, it will be best to consent to improvement in their condition.

This morning, I open the Boston "Daily Mail," and find in its "poet's corner" a translation of Schiller's "Dignity of Woman." In the advertisement of a book on America, I see in the table of contents this sequence, "Republican Institutions. American Slavery. American Ladies."

I open the "*Deutsche Schnellpost*" published in New York, and find at the head of a column, *Juden und Frauenemancipation in Ungarn*—"Emancipation of Jews and Women in Hungary."

The past year has seen action in the Rhode Island legislature, to secure married women rights over their own property, where men showed that a very little examination of the subject could teach them much; an article in the Democratic Review on the same subject more largely considered, written by a woman, impelled, it is said, by glaring wrong to a distinguished friend, having shown the defects in the existing laws, and the state of opinion from which they spring; and on answer from the revered old man, J. Q. Adams, in some respects the Phocion of his time, to an address made him by some ladies. To this last I shall again advert in another place.

These symptoms of the times have come under my view quite accidentally: one who seeks, may, each month or week, collect more.

The numerous party, whose opinions are already labeled and adjusted too much to their mind to admit of any new light, strive, by lectures on some model-woman of bride-like beauty and gentleness, by writing and lending little treatises, intended to mark out with precision the limits of Woman's sphere, and Woman's mission, to prevent other than the rightful shepherd from climbing the wall, or the flock from using any chance to go astray.

Without enrolling ourselves at once on either side, let us look upon the subject from the best point of view which to-day offers; no better, it is to be feared, than a high house-top. A high hill-top, or at least a cathedral-spire, would be desirable.

It may well be an Anti-Slavery party that pleads for Woman, if we consider merely that she does not hold property on equal terms with men; so that, if a husband dies without making a will, the wife, instead of taking at once his place as head of the family, inherits only a part of his fortune, often brought him by herself, as if she were a child, or ward only, not an equal partner.

We will not speak of the innumerable instances in which profligate and idle men live upon the earnings of industrious wives; or if the wives leave them, and take with them the children, to perform the double duty of mother and father, follow from place to place, and threaten to rob them of the children, if deprived of the rights of a husband, as they call them, planting themselves in their poor lodgings, frightening them into paying tribute by taking from them the children, running into debt at the expense of these otherwise so overtasked helots. Such instances count up by scores within my own memory. I have seen the husband who had stained himself by a long course of low vice, till his wife was wearied from her heroic forgiveness, by finding that his treachery made it useless, and that if she would provide bread for herself and her children, she must be separate from his ill fame—I have known this man come to

install himself in the chamber of a woman who loathed him, and say she should never take food without his company. I have known these men steal their children, whom they knew they had no means to maintain, take them into dissolute company, expose them to bodily danger, to frighten the poor woman, to whom, it seems, the fact that she alone had borne the pangs of their birth, and nourished their infancy, does not give an equal right to them. I do believe that this mode of kidnapping—and it is frequent enough in all classes of society—will be by the next age viewed as it is by Heaven now, and that the man who avails himself of the shelter of men's laws to steal from a mother her own children, or arrogate any superior right in them, save that of superior virtue, will bear the stigma he deserves, in common with him who steals grown men from their mother-land, their hopes, and their homes.

I said, we will not speak of this now; yet I *have* spoken, for the subject makes me feel too much. I could give instances that would startle the most vulgar and callous; but I will not, for the public opinion of their own sex is already against such men, and where cases of extreme tyranny are made known, there is private action in the wife's favor. But she ought not to need this, nor, I think, can she long. Men must soon see that as, on their own ground, Woman is the weaker party, she ought to have legal protection, which would make such oppression impossible. But I would not deal with "atrocious instances," except in the way of illustration, neither demand from men a partial redress in some one matter, but go to the root of the whole. If principles could be established, particulars would adjust themselves aright. Ascertain the true destiny of Woman; give her legitimate hopes, and a standard within herself; marriage and all other relations would by degrees be harmonized with these.

But to return to the historical progress of this matter. Knowing that there exists in the minds of men a tone of

feeling toward women as toward slaves, such as is expressed in the common phrase, "Tell that to women and children;" that the infinite soul can only work through them in already ascertained limits; that the gift of reason, Man's highest prerogative, is allotted to them in much lower degree; that they must be kept from mischief and melancholy by being constantly engaged in active labor, which is to be furnished and directed by those better able to think, &c., &c.,—we need not multiply instances, for who can review the experience of last week without recalling words which imply, whether in jest or earnest, these views, or views like these,—knowing this, can we wonder that many reformers think that measures are not likely to be taken in behalf of women, unless their wishes could be publicly represented by women?

"That can never be necessary," cry the other side. "All men are privately influenced by women; each has his wife, sister, or female friends, and is too much biased by these relations to fail of representing their interests; and, if this is not enough, let them propose and enforce their wishes with the pen. The beauty of home would be destroyed, the delicacy of the sex be violated, the dignity of halls of legislation degraded, by an attempt to introduce them there. Such duties are inconsistent with those of a mother;" and then we have ludicrous pictures of ladies in hysterics at the polls, and senate-chambers filled with cradles.

But if, in reply, we admit as truth that Woman seems destined by nature rather for the inner circle, we must add that the arrangements of civilized life have not been, as yet, such as to secure it to her. Her circle, if the duller, is not the quieter. If kept from "excitement," she is not from drudgery. Not only the Indian squaw carries the burdens of the camp, but the favorites of Louis XIV. accompany him in his journeys, and the washerwoman stands at her tub, and carries home her work at all seasons, and in all states of health. Those who think the physical circumstances of